CHAPTER 11

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE
HONG KONG SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION

GENERAL REVENUE ACCOUNT

GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT

Education and Manpower Bureau

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT

Education Department

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Primary education —
Delivery of effective primary education

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Audit Commission
Hong Kong
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PRIMARY EDUCATION —
DELIVERY OF EFFECTIVE PRIMARY EDUCATION

Contents

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DELIVERY OF EFFECTIVE PRIMARY EDUCATION

Summary and key findings

Introduction

A.   It is a government policy to provide nine-year free and universal basic education for every child aged between six and 15. Primary education covers the first six years of free and universal basic education for the young generation to build up knowledge, values and skills for further studies and personal development. As at the beginning of the 2001-02 school year, there were about 478,000 primary students studying in 690 aided schools, 41 government schools and 63 private schools. The average cost of providing free primary education to a primary student is about $26,000 a year. In the financial year 2002-03, the recurrent financial provision for primary education amounts to $11,700 million (paras. 1.2 and 1.3).

Audit review

B.   Audit has recently conducted a value for money audit on primary education. The audit is divided into three broad topics, namely planning and provision of primary school places, the administration of primary schools and the delivery of effective primary education. This report deals with the delivery of effective primary education by aided and government schools. The objective of the review is to examine the existing arrangements for the delivery of effective primary education by public-sector schools with a view to identifying areas for improvement (paras. 1.7 and 1.8).

C.   Audit has identified some areas where improvements need to be made to help better achieve the education objectives of primary education, which are described in paragraphs D to K below. In addition, there is room for improvement in the stakeholders' contributions to primary education as indicated in paragraphs L to N below and in the Education Department (ED)'s monitoring of the delivery of effective primary education as shown in paragraphs O to S below.

Achievement of primary-education objectives

D.   As recommended by the Education Commission (EC) and adopted by the Government, the objectives of primary education, among others, are to enable every student to develop to the full his individual potential in the domains of ethics, intellect, physique, social skills and aesthetics; and encourage students to take the initiative to learn, develop the ability to think and create, and cultivate positive attitudes and values. An Audit's survey has revealed that, except for the objectives of aesthetics, initiative to learn and ability to think and create, the majority of primary-school parents, teachers and principals considered that their schools had fully/largely achieved the objectives of primary education (paras. 2.2, 2.5, 2.19, 2.29 and 2.42).

Scope for improvement to achieve the education objectives

E.   ***Objectives of ethics and positive attitudes and values.*** The EC has said that students' participation in youth-club activities is conducive to developing their positive attitudes and values. Audit's survey has revealed that, notwithstanding that 62% of parents of Primary Five and Primary Six students were willing to let their children participate in the activities of a group nature, only 22% of these students actually participated in such activities. The survey also shows that, while 21% of primary schools collaborated with four or five school-based youth clubs to run activities for their students, 30% of the schools only participated in the activities of one or two of the youth clubs (paras. 2.7 to 2.17).

F.   ***Objectives of intellect, initiative to learn and ability to think and create.*** The EC has recommended more extensive adoption of the activity approach to teaching and learning, which is a child-centred approach aiming at promoting active and self-initiated learning through purposeful activities. Audit notes that, in 2001-02, there were still 28% of Primary One to Primary Three classes and 81% of Primary Four to Primary Six classes which had not been given grants by the ED for adopting the activity approach to teaching (paras. 2.21 to 2.27).

G.   ***Objectives of physique and social skills.*** The ED has said that the percentage of students taking part in inter-school sports events is a measure of the sporting opportunities offered by schools for their students, and participation in such events is conducive to good health, good habits of physical exercise and a spirit of teamwork. Audit's survey has revealed that, while 13% of primary schools participated in seven to nine types of inter-school sports events, 11% of the schools only participated in one to two types of such events. Furthermore, the Home Affairs Bureau has recently found that if students only make use of physical education lessons for physical exercises, their activity level is far too low to gain health benefits. The Bureau has also found that 23% of boys and 10% of girls aged nine to 12 in Hong Kong are obese (paras. 2.31 to 2.40).

H.   ***Objective of aesthetics.*** In general, students' participation in music and cultural events will help them develop their potential in aesthetics. According to the ED, in 2000-01, 12.8%, 12.8%, 0.9% and 1.2% of primary and secondary students participated in the inter-school events in music, speech, dance and drama respectively. Audit's survey has revealed that, while 19% of primary schools participated in all the four types of inter-school events, 10% of the schools did not participate in any of the events (paras. 2.44 to 2.50).

I.   ***Objective of primary students' attainment in three core subjects.*** Another major objective of primary education recommended by the EC and accepted by the Government is to ensure that students attain the basic standards. Audit's survey has found that the majority of the primary-school parents, teachers and principals considered that their schools had fully/largely achieved this objective in Chinese and mathematics. However, less than half of the primary-school parents and teachers considered that their schools had fully/largely achieved the objective of primary education of students' attainment in English. Audit notes that secondary-school principals generally have a higher expectation of the academic standards of primary-school graduates than their counterparts in primary schools. While the majority of primary-school principals considered that primary schools had fully/largely achieved the objective of primary education for the three core subjects (Chinese, English and mathematics), less than half of the secondary-school principals held similar views (paras. 3.4 to 3.7).

J. ***Intensive remedial teaching to academically low achievers.*** The ED has provided resources to primary schools for them to run Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme (IRTP) for students who have severe learning difficulties. The ED has also directly run eleven Resource Teaching Centres (RTCs) to conduct special classes for these students. Audit notes that, in 2001-02, of the total 17,102 primary students who were identified as requiring intensive remedial teaching, 3,906 students (22.8%) could not attend the remedial classes under the IRTP or RTC programme. This is at variance with the EC's goal that the education system should not give up on any single student. Audit also notes that, in 2000-01, a significant percentage of Primary Six students in IRTP classes only attained a very low standard in Chinese, English and mathematics in the Hong Kong Attainment Test (HKAT) (paras. 3.9 to 3.17).

K. ***Primary students' HKAT results.*** The ED's Quality Assurance Inspection (QAI) reports of 2000-01 show students' average HKAT scores of each grade of the 29 primary schools inspected in the year. Based on the reports, Audit notes that there were wide variations in students' academic performance among these schools. For example, in the HKAT, while Primary Six students of the best-performing school in English obtained an average score of 70 in the subject, students of the worst-performing school only obtained an average score of 38 in the same subject. Similarly, students of the best-performing school in mathematics achieved an average score of 77 in the subject, but the students of the worst-performing school only achieved an average score of 49 in the same subject (paras. 3.23 to 3.30).

Stakeholders' roles in delivery of effective primary education

L. ***Teachers' role.*** In Audit's survey, 83% of primary-school teachers said that their schools did not have sufficient arrangements for making commendation to teachers. Furthermore, Audit notes that schools have adopted a "last in, first out" arrangement to select teachers for redundancy regardless of their performance. This is at variance with good human resource management practices. Moreover, the ED's QAI teams have assessed that 3%, 13% and 20% of the primary schools inspected in 2000-01 attained an unsatisfactory level of performance in "teaching strategies and teaching skills", "curriculum planning and organisation", and "curriculum management" respectively. Audit's survey has revealed that, in 2001-02, 12% of primary-school teachers did not attend seminars on education, and 44% did not attend training courses. Audit considers that teachers need to keep abreast of the latest developments in teaching techniques and methodologies (paras. 4.2 to 4.17).

M. ***Schools' role.*** In order to help students lay a good foundation for lifelong learning and all-round development, the EC has recommended that the curriculum for the nine-year basic education should be reformed so that every student would gain a balanced exposure in eight key learning areas. The ED has specified a range of lesson time for each of these areas. Audit's survey has revealed that some schools allocated more lesson time for some key learning areas and less time for other key learning areas. Furthermore, the ED has suggested in its guidelines to schools that the time for written homework for lower and upper primary students should not exceed 30 minutes and 60 minutes a day respectively. However, Audit's survey has shown that 59% of Primary Five and Primary Six students spent two hours or more a day on written homework (9% of them spent four hours or more), which was significantly higher than the ED's suggested limit. While the majority of parents (70%) considered that the amount of students' homework was appropriate, the majority of primary-school principals (82%) and teachers (74%) said that the amount of homework should be reduced (paras. 4.20 to 4.33).

N.   ***Parents' role.***   The EC has recommended that parents should participate actively in school-based management (SBM).   Parents usually participate in schools' activities through parent-teacher associations (PTAs). However, Audit notes that, in 2001-02, of the total 731 aided and government primary schools, 87 schools (12%) had not set up PTAs. Furthermore, Audit's survey has revealed that only 11% of parents of primary students participated in some form of voluntary work for their children's schools (paras. 4.36 to 4.43).

ED's monitoring of the delivery of effective primary education

O.   ***Implementation of the SBM initiatives.***   In 1991, the Education and Manpower Bureau and the ED recommended the implementation of SBM initiatives in schools. In 1997, the EC made similar recommendations.   In essence, the SBM initiatives can be broadly grouped into four categories, namely compilation of school plans, reports and profiles; preparation of written constitutions for school management committees (SMCs); teachers, parents and alumni's participation in SMCs; and staff appraisal and staff development. The audit findings on these areas are reported in paragraphs P to S below (paras. 5.4 to 5.9).

P.   ***Compilation of school plans, reports and profiles under SBM.***   The EC has recommended the preparation of documents outlining the schools' profiles, development plans and budgets and means of evaluating progress. The majority of schools have submitted their annual school plans, reports and school profiles to the ED. Audit notes that only 18% and 25% of the schools respectively uploaded their annual school plans and reports onto their websites for the information of the public. Furthermore, in 2000-01, the ED's QAI teams observed that 13% of the schools inspected were rated as performing unsatisfactorily on "evaluation tools and procedures", and another 13% of the schools had the same rating on "reporting and action" (paras. 5.10 to 5.17).

Q.   ***Preparation of written constitutions for SMCs under SBM.***   The EC has recommended the preparation of written constitutions for SMCs. An SMC constitution addresses the composition of the SMC and its membership, appointment of different categories of managers and their tenure, and requirements for the frequency of SMC meetings and their proceedings. Audit notes that, up to June 2002, of the 731 aided and government primary schools, only 146 schools (20%) submitted their SMC constitutions to the ED for approval (paras. 5.18 to 5.21).

R.   ***Teachers, parents and alumni's participation in SMCs under SBM.***   The EC has recommended the participation of teachers, parents and alumni in school management, development planning, evaluation and decision making. In its survey conducted in April 2002, the ED found that only 20%, 15% and 9% of the public-sector primary schools respectively had participation by teachers, parents and alumni in their SMCs. Audit also notes that, in some schools, the school managers served as school managers of a large number of schools at the same time. For example, nine school managers of a school participated in the management of about 75 schools concurrently. The ED has accepted a recommendation that each school manager should in principle serve no more than five schools at the same time. Furthermore, in Audit's survey, Audit found that 46% of the SMCs only met once or twice a year. In Audit's view, it is unlikely that the school managers of these schools can effectively participate in the schools' planning and management (paras. 5.7(b), 5.22 to 5.32).

S.   ***Staff appraisal and staff development under SBM.***   The ED has recommended the development of formal procedures and resources for staff appraisal and staff development according to

teachers' needs. In Audit's survey, Audit notes that 11% and 44% of the schools did not conduct performance appraisals of their teachers and principals respectively. Audit considers that there is room for improvement in human resource management in these schools (paras. 5.33 to 5.35).

Audit recommendations

T.   Audit has made the following major recommendations that the Director of Education should:

Measures to better achieve the primary-education objectives

(a)   take action to identify those schools which do not provide their students with sufficient extra-curricular activities and provide assistance to these schools to help them participate more in such activities (para. 2.54(a));

(b)   take action to ascertain the extent of implementation of the EC's recommendation on more extensive adoption of the activity approach in individual schools and provide assistance to schools which are slow in adopting this approach (para. 2.54(b) and (c));

(c)   develop appropriate performance indicators for schools to assess and report their performance in relation to the objectives of primary education (para. 2.54(f));

Primary students' attainment in three core subjects

(d)   take action to improve the coordination between primary and secondary-school principals so as to reduce their expectation gap, thereby facilitating the assimilation of primary students into secondary schools (para. 3.34(a));

(e)   conduct a review on the variations in students' performance in the three core subjects in different schools and, in particular, ascertain the reasons for students' relatively low level of academic achievement in some schools (para. 3.34(d));

Intensive remedial teaching to academically low achievers

(f)   provide intensive remedial teaching to all students who need such teaching (para. 3.34(b));

(g)   provide appropriate training to teachers who are required to teach IRTP or RTC classes (para. 3.34(c));

Teachers' role in delivery of effective primary education

(h)   ask schools to take into account teachers' performance when selecting teachers to be made redundant (para. 4.18(b));

(i)   encourage schools to arrange more professional exchanges among their teaching staff (para. 4.18(d));

(j)   ensure that teachers attend a minimum number of hours of professional training each year (para. 4.18(e));

Schools' role in delivery of effective primary education

(k)   ensure that schools follow as far as possible the ED's guidelines on the allocation of lesson time among the eight key learning areas and the amount of time spent on written homework (para. 4.34(a)(i) and (iii));

(l)   organise promotion campaigns to explain to parents the importance of all-round development of their children especially in early childhood education and the need to reduce their homework (para. 4.34(c));

Parents' role in delivery of effective primary education

(m)   ask the 87 primary schools which have not set up a PTA to set up one (para. 4.44(a));

(n)   invite principals and parents to share the experience of parents' participation in school activities with other schools (para. 4.44(b));

Implementation of the SBM initiatives

(o)   identify and provide appropriate guidance to those schools which have not yet complied with the ED's requirements relating to the SBM on annual school plans, annual reports and school profiles; written constitutions for SMCs; the membership of SMCs; and the staff appraisal system (para. 5.42(a));

(p)   identify the school managers who are members of more than five SMCs and advise them that they should serve no more than five schools (para. 5.42(e));

(q)   consider setting guidelines on the minimum number of meetings to be held by SMCs in a school year (para. 5.42(f)); and

(r)   ask schools to incorporate in the staff appraisal system the relevant procedures laid down in the ED's School Administration Guide, such as the procedures for conducting appraisal interviews and appeals (para. 5.42(g)).

Response from the Administration

U.   The Administration has generally accepted the audit recommendations.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1   This PART describes the background and the objectives of the audit report.

Background

1.2   It is a government policy to provide nine-year free and universal basic education for every child aged between six and 15 (or completion of Secondary Three (S3), whichever is earlier). Primary education covers the first six years of free and universal basic education for the young generation to build up knowledge, values and skills for further studies and personal development.

1.3   As at the beginning of the 2001-02 school year (September 2001), there were about 478,000 primary students in primary schools in Hong Kong. Primary school places are provided by aided schools managed by voluntary bodies under the Code of Aid for Primary Schools, by government schools managed directly by the Education Department (ED), and by private schools. As at the beginning of the 2001-02 school year, the composition of primary schools was as follows:

	Number of schools (Note 1)		Number of students	
Aided schools (Note 2)	690	87%	412,000	86%
Government schools	41	5%	32,000	7%
Private schools	63	8%	34,000	7%
Total	**794**	**100%**	**478,000**	**100%**

Source: ED's records

Note 1: If a school has a.m. and p.m. sessions, it is counted as two schools.

Note 2: These include 97 rural primary schools.

The average cost of providing free primary education to a primary student is about $26,000 a year. In the financial year 2002-03, the recurrent financial provision for primary education amounts to $11,700 million.

Role of Education Department

1.4   The Director of Education, who heads the ED, helps formulate and implements educational policies at kindergarten, primary and secondary levels. The ED's main responsibilities include execution of the Education Ordinance (Cap. 279); planning, provision and allocation of

school places; provision of education opportunities for children with special educational needs; development of school curricula; registration of schools and assurance of school education quality; monitoring of teaching standards; and support to schools with public funding and other facilities.

Education reform measures

1.5   To meet the needs of society in the 21st century, in 1998, the Education Commission (EC) embarked on a two-year comprehensive review of the overall education system in Hong Kong. In September 2000, the EC issued a report on the "Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong". The Government accepted the EC report, which is regarded as a blueprint for education reform.

1.6   Over the past two years, the Government has put in place a number of reform measures, including the reform of the Primary One Admission system and Secondary School Places Allocation system. Moreover, measures have been introduced to strengthen support for schools and teachers. Improvement will be made in implementation arrangements and support measures.

Audit review on primary education

1.7   Audit has recently conducted a value for money audit on primary education. Since primary education is a broad subject, the scope of the audit review is divided into three broad topics. The audit findings are contained in three separate reports as follows:

- the delivery of effective primary education (the subject matter of this report);

- planning and provision of primary school places (Chapter 9 of Director of Audit's Report No. 39); and

- the administration of primary schools (Chapter 10 of Director of Audit's Report No. 39).

Audit review on delivery of effective primary education

1.8   The objective of this value for money audit is to examine the existing arrangements for the delivery of effective primary education by public-sector schools (i.e. aided and government schools) with a view to identifying areas for improvement. This review covers the following areas:

(a)   the achievement of the primary-education objectives (PART 2);

(b)   the achievement of the primary-education objective of students' attainment in three core subjects (PART 3);

(c)   stakeholders' roles in the delivery of effective primary education (PART 4); and

(d)   the ED's monitoring of the delivery of effective primary education (PART 5).

Audit has found that there are a number of areas where improvements can be made. Audit has made recommendations to address the issues.

Audit's survey

1.9   In mid-2002, Audit engaged consultants to conduct a survey to gauge stakeholders' views on the delivery of effective primary education. The stakeholders included students, parents, primary-school principals and teachers, and secondary-school principals. Before the survey, the audit team and Audit's consultants interviewed the principals and held focus-group discussions with the teachers of seven primary schools and three secondary schools to identify issues to be covered in the survey. All the schools were randomly selected. Based on the views expressed at the interviews and focus-group meetings, the audit team and Audit's consultants designed questionnaires for the survey. In May 2002, Audit forwarded a set of the questionnaires to the ED for information. Subsequently, Audit's consultants conducted the questionnaire survey which covered a representative sample of stakeholders to generate an overall profile of their views on the delivery of effective primary education in Hong Kong. The methodology and response rates of the survey are shown in Appendix A.

General response from the Administration

1.10   The **Secretary for Education and Manpower** has said that:

(a)   he welcomes the Director of Audit's study on the delivery of primary education and commends the study team for the breadth and depth of its recommendations;

(b)   education is one of the top priorities of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). The Government has invested heavily in education with a 62% increase in overall expenditure for the education sector since 1996-97. The corresponding increase for primary education is 67%;

(c)   with the benefit of hindsight, it is true to say that for a very long time in the past, the pre-HKSAR Government did not accord sufficient priority to the development of primary education. Bi-sessional schools, sub-standard school buildings, and non-graduate teachers are legacies that the Government is still grappling with until this day. They impose serious constraints on the Government's ability to provide students with an all-round education for the lack of time, space and professionalism. The family and community also played an important part in shaping the culture of schools and the learning habits of students over the years;

(d) the Government of the HKSAR has made great strides in expediting the development of whole-day primary schools, modernising school premises, and upgrading the qualification of teachers. The education reform, which was launched in 2000, complements these efforts. The aim is to achieve balanced development of our young people in the five domains of ethics, intellect, physique, social skills and aesthetics, improve students' motivation to learn, and nurture their aptitude and skills to be lifelong learners;

(e) the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) acknowledges that there is still a long way to go, but the EMB is optimistic about future prospects. While the EMB recognises the shortcomings identified by Audit, it notes that there are many good practices that have not been reported in the audit report. Education is an art. In dealing with people, each person is endowed with unique aptitudes and personality. Therefore, there is no fixed formula for success, hence the importance of school leadership, and the professionalism of teachers;

(f) many of the problems highlighted in Audit's study, e.g. didactic teaching, low expectations and ineffective remedial teaching, are symptoms of a more fundamental issue — lack of professionalism and updating of knowledge among some of the educators. Continuing professional development of principals and teachers must be the EMB's priority in the years ahead; and

(g) to build an education system that is progressive and adaptive to the needs of students and society, it requires teachers who are learned and dedicated, who always have the interest of students at heart, and who are role models of lifelong learning. To support this vision, the human resource management system must provide the incentive to strive for continuous improvement, and create the disincentive to be complacent. Employment and promotion must be based on merit, not seniority. The "last in, first out" arrangement for redundant teachers and incremental credit for senior teachers who have stepped down are examples of outdated employment practices that require modernisation.

1.11 The **Director of Education** has said that:

(a) he is grateful for Audit's efforts in conducting this value for money audit on primary education. He thanks Audit for making recommendations to improve the delivery of primary education by public-sector schools; and

(b) in general, the ED considers Audit's recommendations acceptable and it will take follow-up actions accordingly.

PART 2:   ACHIEVEMENT OF PRIMARY-EDUCATION OBJECTIVES

2.1   This PART examines stakeholders' (primary-school parents, teachers and principals) views on the achievement of the objectives of primary education, and proposes measures that can help better achieve the objectives.

Objectives of primary education

2.2   In early 1999, the EC invited members of the public to participate in drawing up the objectives of education for the 21st century as the basis for a review on Hong Kong's education system. The EC has said that the overall direction of the education reform is to create more room for schools, teachers and students, to offer all-round and balanced learning opportunities, and to lay the foundation for lifelong learning.   Having taken into account the comments received from members of the public, the EC revised the objectives of education for various learning stages. The objectives of the nine-year basic education (i.e. primary and junior secondary education), as recommended by the EC in 2000 and adopted by the Government (Note 1), are to:

   (a)   enable every student to develop to the full his individual potential in the domains of:

         (i)   ethics;

         (ii)   intellect;

         (iii)   physique;

         (iv)   social skills; and

         (v)   aesthetics;

   (b)   ensure that students attain the basic standards and encourage them to strive for excellence (discussed in PART 3 below); and

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Note 1:   *In the 2000 Policy Address, the Government stated that it had adopted the EC's recommendations contained in its "Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong" of September 2000.*

(c)   encourage students to:

   (i)   take the initiative to learn;

   (ii)   develop the ability to think and create; and

   (iii)   cultivate positive attitudes and values.

Audit's survey

2.3   In mid-2002, Audit conducted a survey to gauge the stakeholders' perception and views on the achievement of the objectives of primary education (see para. 1.9 above). Paragraphs 2.5 to 2.54 below report the responses of the stakeholders and propose measures that can help better achieve the objectives.

Audit observations on achievement of primary-education objectives

Achievement of primary-education objectives of developing ethics and positive attitudes and values

2.4   The objectives of the nine-year basic education include enabling every student to develop his full potential in the domain of ethics (see para. 2.2(a)(i) above), and encouraging students to cultivate positive attitudes and values (see para. 2.2(c)(iii) above). As the two objectives are closely related, Audit discusses the stakeholders' perception of achievement of these two objectives together in paragraphs 2.5 to 2.17 below.

2.5   *Audit's survey results.* Figure 1 below shows the respondents' perception of the achievement of the objectives of primary education of enabling every student to develop to the full his individual potential in the domain of ethics, and encouraging students to cultivate positive attitudes and values.

Figure 1

**Respondents' perception of achievement of
primary-education objectives of developing ethics, and positive attitudes and values**

**(a)   Enabling every student to develop to the full his
potential in ethics**

Primary-school parents	55%	30%	8% 7%
Primary-school teachers	60%	29%	10% 1%
Primary-school principals	94%		3% 3%

(b)   Encouraging students to cultivate positive attitudes

Primary-school parents	48%	27%	17% 8%
Primary-school teachers	45%	36%	17% 2%
Primary-school principals	76%		21% 3%

(c)   Encouraging students to cultivate positive values

Primary-school parents	52%	26%	14% 8%
Primary-school teachers	57%	31%	10% 2%
Primary-school principals	80%		20%

0%   50%   100%

Percentage of respondents

Legend: ▨ The objective was fully/largely achieved

☐ The objective was half achieved

▨ Only a small fraction of the objective was achieved

■ Respondents expressed no comments

Source: Audit's survey

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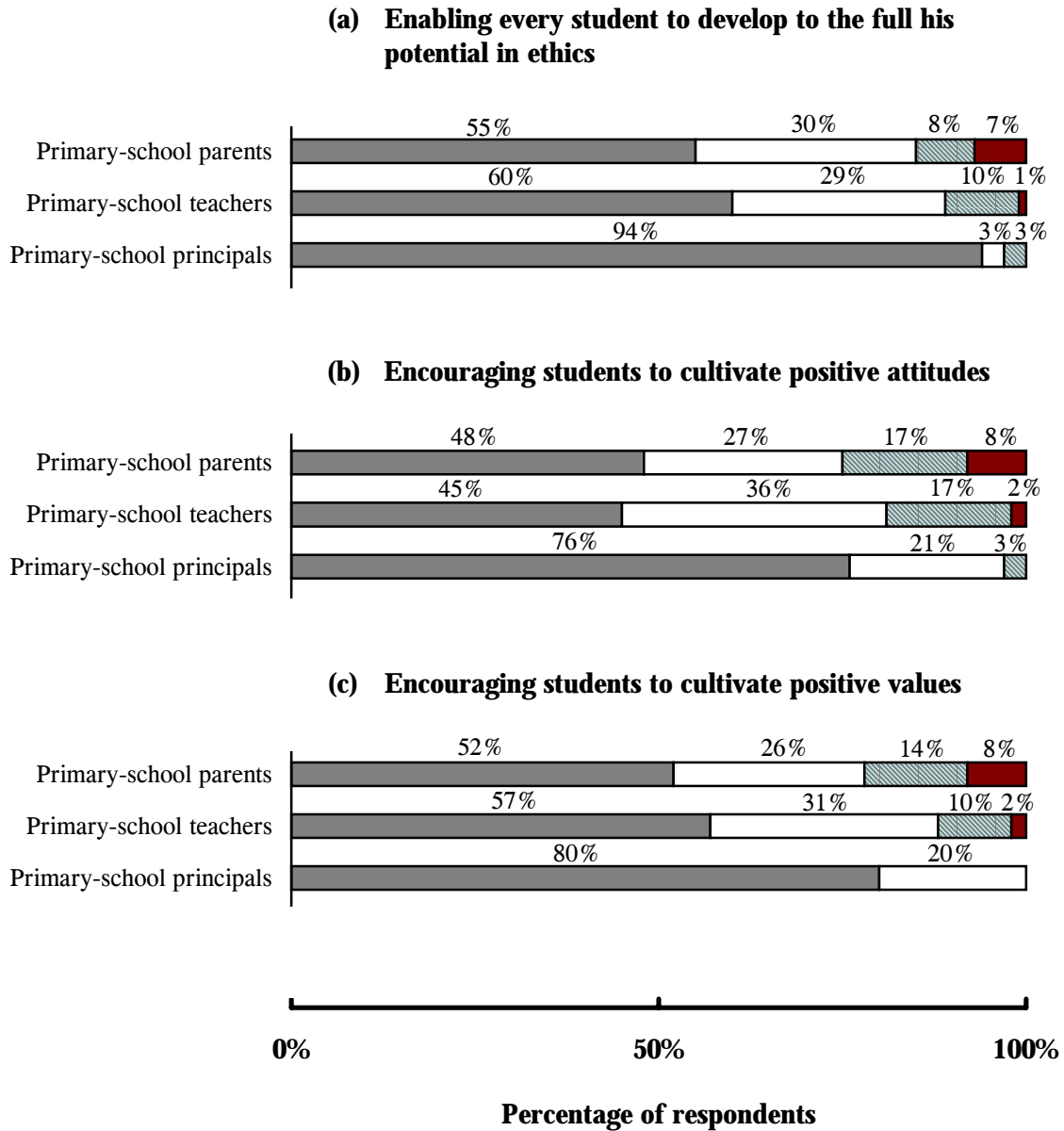
2.6   Figure 1 above shows that the majority of the primary-school principals (76% to 94%) were of the view that, on average, schools had fully/largely achieved the objectives of primary education of ethics, and positive attitudes and values. However, only about half of the parents and teachers (45% to 60%) considered that schools had fully/largely achieved the above education objectives. Audit considers that there is room for primary schools to make improvements in these areas.

Activities for helping students develop their potential in ethics, and encouraging them to cultivate positive attitudes and values

2.7   The following are the major activities conducted by schools for helping students develop their potential in ethics, and encouraging them to cultivate positive attitudes and values:

(a)   activities organised by uniform groups, youth-service organisations and cultural bodies;

(b)   group activities organised by schools themselves or in collaboration with district organisations, religious bodies, schools of the same sponsoring bodies, etc. (e.g. school orchestras, the Student Environmental Protection Ambassador Scheme and the Healthy School Award Scheme);

(c)   school assemblies, morning gatherings, school ethos, etc.; and

(d)   class sessions (the development of students' ethics and positive values and attitudes are incorporated in the curriculum of different key learning areas).

2.8   ***ED's observations on extra-curricular activities.*** In the ED's Quality Assurance Inspections (QAIs — see paras. 5.44 to 5.46 below) conducted in the 2000-01 school year (all years hereinafter refer to school years unless otherwise specified), the ED found that:

(a)   in respect of planning and organising extra-curricular activities, 54% of the primary schools inspected were rated as good or excellent (3% of the schools were rated as unsatisfactory). In organising extra-curricular activities, the key strengths of these schools included:

(i)   a good variety of activities that were organised to enrich students' school life and to develop their potential;

(ii)   strong commitment of teachers and active participation of students in extra-curricular activities;

(iii)   good coordination among clubs and associations in schools;

(iv)   good utilisation of community resources and parents' involvement in organising extra-curricular activities; and

(v)   sufficient financial support provided by the schools; and

(b)   in respect of students' participation and achievement in extra-curricular activities, 33% of the primary schools inspected were rated as good or excellent (3% of the schools were rated as unsatisfactory). The schools performed well in encouraging their students to participate in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities (including inter-school activities). Students took part in such activities with keen interest and gained a number of awards in sports, music and speech contests.

2.9   *EC's recommendation on students' participation in youth-club activities.* In its report of September 2000, the EC stated that schools might collaborate with different service organisations, such as uniform groups, youth-service organisations and cultural bodies to organise life-wide learning activities which were conducive to developing students' positive attitudes and values such as civic-mindedness and commitment to the country and the community. Photographs 1 and 2 on the centre pages show primary students' participation in youth-club activities.

2.10   *ED's performance indicator on youth-club activities.* In its report *"Education Indicators for the Hong Kong School Education System"*, the ED has shown the numbers of secondary and primary students joining nine well-established school-based youth clubs as an indicator. The ED considers that, through active participation in the youth-club activities, students have opportunities to develop their leadership abilities, organisation skills and initiative, foster respect for discipline and contribute to the welfare of the community. Of the nine youth clubs, six have collaborated with primary schools to run activities for their students. In 2000-01, the percentages of primary students (including students of private schools) joining four youth clubs were:

	Club A	Club B	Club C	Club D
Percentage of primary students (Note)	6.7%	6.1%	3.7%	0.2%

Source: ED's records

Note: The ED did not have information on the number of primary students joining the other two clubs.

2.11   ***Audit's survey on primary schools' participation in youth-club activities.***   In the light of the EC's recommendation (see para. 2.9 above), Audit conducted a survey on schools' collaboration with youth clubs to organise activities for their students.   Figure 2 below shows the distribution of primary schools (in Audit's survey) which collaborated with school-based youth clubs to run activities for their students in 2001-02.

Figure 2

**Distribution of primary schools which collaborated
with youth clubs to run activities for their students in 2001-02**

5 youth clubs: 6%

1 youth club: 7%

4 youth clubs: 15%

2 youth clubs: 23%
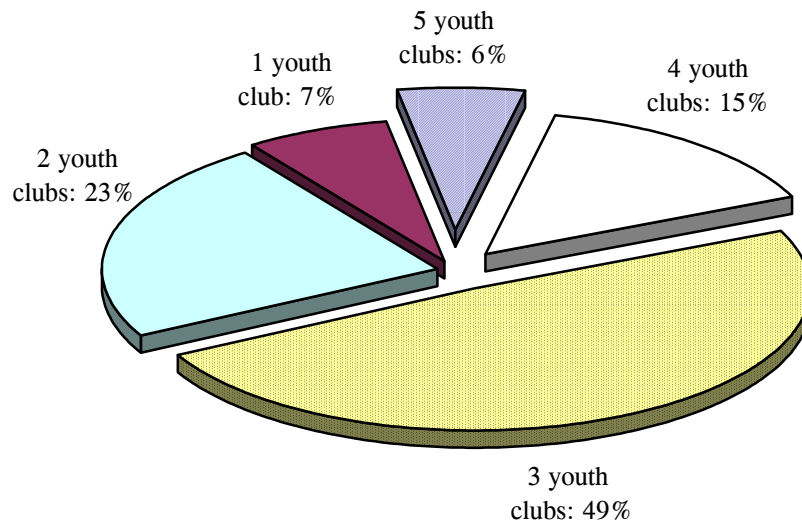
3 youth clubs: 49%

Source: Audit's survey

Figure 2 above shows that 21% (15% + 6%) of the primary schools collaborated with four or five school-based youth clubs to run activities for their students.   On the other hand, 30% (7% + 23%) of the primary schools only participated in the activities of one or two of the youth clubs.

2.12   To ascertain the attitudes of parents and students on extra-curricular activities, Audit's survey also covered the level of students' participation in these activities. The survey revealed that:

(a)   22% of Primary Five (P5) and Primary Six (P6) students participated in extra-curricular activities of a group nature;

(b)   62% of the parents of P5 and P6 students (Note 2) were willing to let their children participate in the activities of a group nature (30% of the parents expressed no comments and 8% of the parents were not willing); and

(c)   over 70% of the parents considered that their children's participation in the activities of a group nature would help their children develop their social skills, discipline, sense of responsibility and/or confidence.

2.13   Notwithstanding that 62% of the parents were willing to let their children participate in the activities of a group nature, only 22% of P5 and P6 students actually participated in the activities. Audit's enquiries with schools revealed that schools usually selected students to join the youth clubs based on their academic performance (preference being usually given to good performers), or by drawing lots. The former approach tends to exclude students who may benefit most from participation in youth-club activities. For example, some students with poor academic achievement often have a low self-esteem. These students need the opportunities to perform in extra-curricular activities which help improve their self-esteem and confidence. Audit's enquiries with the youth clubs revealed that schools' participation in the clubs' activities was on a voluntary basis, and the clubs would normally accept schools which applied to collaborate with them.

2.14   At Audit's meetings with the principals and teachers of seven primary schools, the principals/teachers of three schools pointed out that:

(a)   some primary students were too dependent on their parents in their daily lives and they lacked opportunities to develop their potential in the domains of ethics and positive attitudes and values;

Note 2:   *The respondents in this part of the Audit's survey were P5 and P6 students and their parents (see paras. 3 and 4 in Appendix A).*

(b) some teachers had not been provided with adequate training in ethical development of students; and

(c) if more time was spent on students' ethical development, a corresponding reduction in the curriculum for the other subjects would be required.

2.15   Furthermore, the principals/teachers of two schools said that, due to the heavy workload of teachers:

- some schools only collaborated with one or two youth clubs to run activities for their students; and

- most schools could not accept all those students whose parents had expressed an interest for their children to join the clubs.

2.16   ***ED's response to primary schools' participation in youth-club activities.*** In response to Audit's observations in paragraphs 2.11 to 2.15 above, the ED has said that:

(a) moral and civic education emphasises considerably on reflective thinking. Therefore, emphasis should not be placed on the quantity of activities organised for students;

(b) the youth clubs have limitation in capacity to take up a large number of students;

(c) some schools would like to have a diversity of activities for students rather than only those organised by youth clubs to help develop students' ethical values and attitudes;

(d) recently, the ED has made contributions and efforts to promote uniform-group activities in different ways. It has implemented a three-year Uniform Group Enhancement Scheme to provide funding for the establishment and expansion of uniform-group units in schools, organisation of related uniform-group activities to enable parents and students to have a better understanding of uniform-group activities, and provision of training courses to groom more uniform-group leaders; and

(e)   the ED has sent publicity leaflets on the Uniform Group Enhancement Scheme to schools, parent-teacher associations (PTAs) and alumni associations.   In 2001-02, the ED organised publicity activities such as radio and television interviews and briefing sessions to promote uniform-group activities.   The ED will continue its efforts to promote uniform-group activities in 2002-03.

2.17   The audit findings in paragraphs 2.7 to 2.16 above show that some schools are performing quite well in providing a good variety of activities to help students develop their potential in ethics and encourage them to cultivate positive attitudes and values. However, Figure 2 in paragraph 2.11 above shows that there is room for improvement for some schools in the provision of extra-curricular activities for their students. **Audit therefore considers that there is a need for the ED to take action to identify these schools and provide appropriate assistance to them.   Students' participation in uniform-group activities, among others, will help better achieve the EC's stated objectives of primary education of developing students' ethics and positive attitudes and values (see para. 2.2(a)(i) and (c)(iii) above).**

Achievement of primary-education objectives of developing intellect, initiative to learn and ability to think and create

2.18   The objectives of the nine-year basic education include enabling every student to develop his full potential in the domain of intellect (see para. 2.2(a)(ii) above), and encouraging students to take the initiative to learn and develop the ability to think and create (see para. 2.2(c)(i) and (ii) above). As the three objectives are closely related, Audit discusses the stakeholders' perception of achievement of the three objectives together in paragraphs 2.19 to 2.27 below.

2.19   *Audit's survey results.*   Figure 3 below shows the respondents' perception of the achievement of the objectives of primary education of enabling every student to develop to the full his individual potential in the domain of intellect, and encouraging students to take the initiative to learn and develop the ability to think and create.

Figure 3

**Respondents' perception of achievement of primary-education
objectives of developing intellect, initiative to learn and ability to think and create**

**(a) Enabling every student to develop to the full
his potential in intellect**
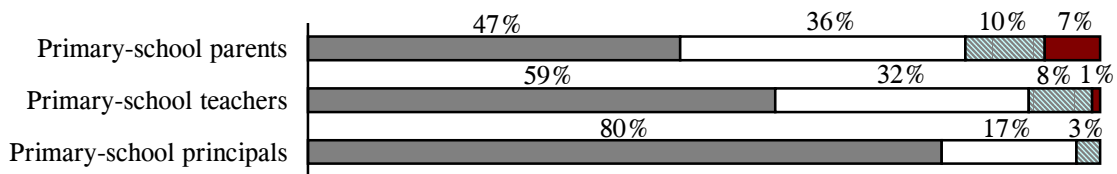
(b) Encouraging students to take initiative to learn
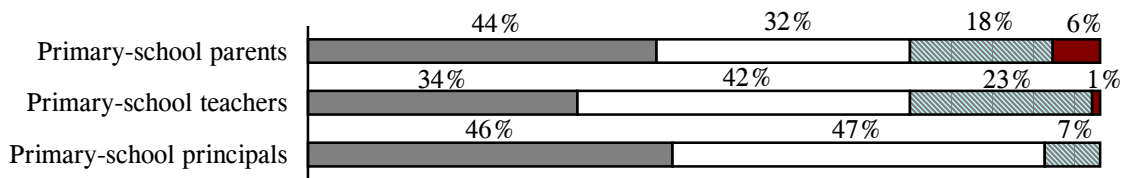
**(c) Encouraging students to develop ability to think
and create**
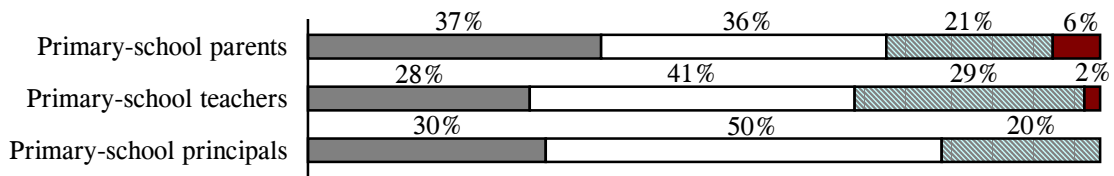
Percentage of respondents

Legend:

☐ The objective was fully/largely achieved

☐ The objective was half achieved

☐ Only a small fraction of the objective was achieved

☐ Respondents expressed no comments

Source: Audit's survey

2.20   Figure 3 above shows that primary-school parents, teachers and principals were generally satisfied with schools' achievement on developing students' potential in the domain of intellect (47% to 80% of them considered that, on average, schools had fully/largely achieved the objective of primary education of intellect).   However, regarding the objective of encouraging students to take the initiative to learn, only 34% to 46% of these stakeholders considered that, on average, schools had fully/largely achieved the objective.   These stakeholders were even less satisfied with schools' achievement on encouraging students to develop the ability to think and create.   Of these stakeholders, only 28% of teachers, 30% of principals, and 37% of parents considered that, on average, schools had fully/largely achieved the education objective of encouraging students to develop the ability to think and create.   **This shows that primary schools generally need to make improvements in encouraging students to take the initiative to learn and develop the ability to think and create.**

**Activities for helping students develop
their potential in intellect, and encouraging them
to take initiative to learn and develop ability to think and create**

2.21   The following are the major measures taken by schools for helping students develop their potential in intellect, and encouraging them to take the initiative to learn and develop the ability to think and create:

(a)   using the activity approach to teaching;

(b)   adopting curriculum initiatives/practices such as situation-specific learning, project learning, curriculum integration, theme-based learning, inquiry learning, target-setting learning, life-wide learning, use of information technology (IT) for interactive learning, etc.; and

(c)   encouraging students to participate in national or international academic competitions such as national/international Mathematics Olympiad.

2.22   ***EC's recommendation on adoption of activity approach in primary schools.***   The activity approach is a child-centred approach to learning which aims at promoting active and self-initiated learning through purposeful activities. In the *"White Paper on Primary Education and Pre-primary Services"* of 1981, the Government stated that it had decided to encourage the development of the activity approach, particularly in Primary One (P1) to Primary Three (P3) classes. In its Report No. 4 of 1990, the EC recommended that more extensive adoption and use of the activity approach should be promoted in view of its benefits to school children.

2.23 ***ED's performance indicator on the adoption of the activity approach.*** In its report *"Education Indicators for the Hong Kong School Education System"*, the ED has shown the percentages of primary classes in public-sector schools adopting the activity approach to teaching as an indicator. The ED has said that schools may extend the adoption of the activity approach to upper primary level if they find themselves ready and have adequate staff and resources for the extension. Photographs 3 and 4 on the centre pages show primary students attending classes using the activity approach.

2.24 ***Adoption of the activity approach in schools.*** Figure 4 below shows the percentages of classes in aided and government primary schools which had been given grants for adopting the activity approach to teaching between 1997-98 and 2001-02.

Figure 4

**Percentages of classes in aided and
government primary schools which had been given grants for
adopting activity approach to teaching between 1997-98 and 2001-02**

Percentage of classes
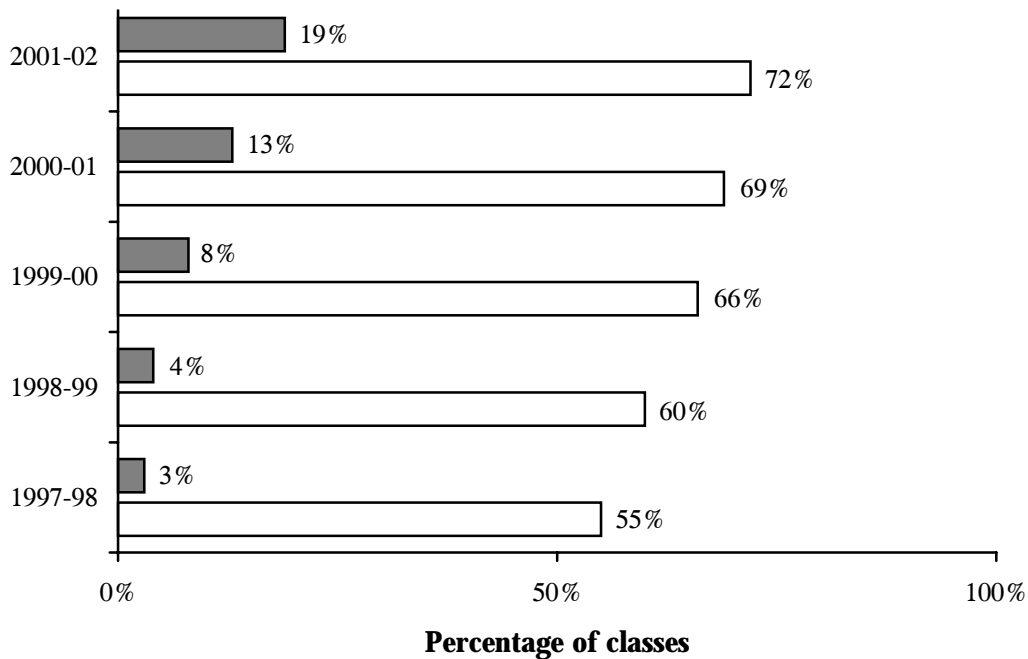
Legend: ▨ P4 – P6 Classes

☐ P1 – P3 Classes

Source: ED's records

Figure 4 above shows that there has been an increasing trend of aided and government primary schools which are given grants for adopting the activity approach to teaching in recent years. However, in 2001-02, there were still 28% (100% − 72%) of P1 to P3 classes and 81% (100% − 19%) of Primary Four (P4) to P6 classes of the schools which had not been given grants for adopting the activity approach.

2.25 ***Principals and teachers' views on adoption of activity approach in primary schools.*** At Audit's meetings with the principals and teachers of seven primary schools, the principals/teachers of some schools said that:

Merits of adoption of the activity approach

(a) due to the fact that many primary students were mainly trained in rote learning, they generally lacked opportunities to develop their creativity and thinking. The activity approach would help develop students' creativity which could help improve students' academic performance;

(b) the activity approach and cross-curriculum theme-based studies and projects could help arouse students' learning interest;

(c) more students were participating actively in group discussions due to the introduction of more role-playing activities, project work and the activity approach in classes;

Challenges of adoption of the activity approach

(d) teachers did not have sufficient knowledge and experience in designing and delivering lessons by adopting the activity approach;

(e) secondary schools normally placed great emphasis on students' academic performance when admitting Secondary One (S1) students. Primary schools therefore had pressure to concentrate their efforts on students' academic training;

(f) the activity approach was not widely adopted for P4 to P6 classes because students in these classes needed to concentrate their efforts on subjects in which they needed to be examined in the Academic Aptitude Test (Note 3);

Note 3: *Between 1977-78 and 1999-2000, P6 students needed to attend the Academic Aptitude Test. Students' results in the Test were used for secondary-school place allocation purpose. This Test was abolished in 2000-01.*

(g)   many parents did not understand and accept that students could learn through group activities; and

(h)   the activity approach required different configuration of classrooms and reduced teacher-student ratios, which were constraints in some schools.

2.26   ***ED's response to adoption of the activity approach in schools.***   In response to Audit's observations in paragraphs 2.24 and 2.25 above, the ED has said that:

(a)   there has been new development in primary school curriculum with the release of Curriculum Development Council (Note 4 — CDC)'s Report "Learning to Learn — The Way Forward in Curriculum Development" in 2001 and the "Basic Education Curriculum Guide — Building on Strengths" in 2002. Under the new curriculum, the activity approach is only one of the child-centred learning and teaching approaches. As pointed out in these documents, the spirit, positive evidence and good practices of the activity approach and the Target Oriented Curriculum, apart from other earlier innovations, have already been incorporated in the development of the primary school curriculum;

(b)   the Basic Education Curriculum Guide also highlights the need for schools to adopt a variety of approaches as well as learning and teaching strategies for achieving different learning targets or objectives, and there is no fixed rule regarding which strategy is the best. Moreover, the adoption of a particular learning and teaching strategy or classroom organisation does not automatically result in the desired effect without other supportive measures such as suitable lesson/activity preparation, teacher-student interaction and learning and teaching resources;

(c)   the ED will not only focus on the activity approach but will encourage schools to adopt situation-specific, child-centred learning and teaching approaches to cater for the diverse needs and interests of their students;

(d)   in addition to the grants given to schools for adopting the activity approach to teaching, there are many other curriculum and subject grants for promoting child-centred and activity-based learning in schools;

Note 4:   *The CDC is a free-standing advisory body appointed by the Government to give advice on matters relating to curriculum development for the local school system from pre-primary to the sixth form. Membership of the CDC and its subordinating committees includes heads of schools, practising teachers, academics from tertiary institutions, professionals from related bodies or related fields, representatives from the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority and the Vocational Training Council, parents, employers, as well as officers from the ED and the Social Welfare Department.*

(e)   as regards school-based curriculum development, the ED has been providing relevant support to schools. For example, public-sector schools are each provided with a five-year time-limited additional teacher post by three phases from 2002-03 to 2004-05 to assist the school heads to lead school-based curriculum development in the light of the current curriculum reform;

(f)   starting from 2001 and under the current curriculum reform, the ED has been organising an annual large-scale knowledge fair on different themes like "assessment for learning" and "seed projects". There is an increasing number of schools joining the "seed projects" whose main purposes include knowledge building, generation of new ideas in promoting child-centred learning to develop students' potentials, dissemination of good practices and experience sharing in such areas; and

(g)   in the ED's QAI Annual Report 2000-01, the ED found that most students were attentive and well-behaved in class, and many of them were motivated and showed interest in learning.

2.27   Nevertheless, given that a significant percentage of public-sector primary schools have not yet been given grants for adopting the activity approach (see para. 2.24 above), there is room for more extensive adoption of the approach to teaching as recommended by the EC. **Audit therefore considers that there is a need for the ED to ascertain the extent of the adoption of the activity approach in primary schools. The adoption of this approach, among others, is conducive to helping students develop their potential in the domain of intellect, and encouraging students to take the initiative to learn and develop the ability to think and create (see para. 2.2(a)(ii) and (c)(i) and (ii) above).**

**Achievement of primary-education
objectives of developing physique and social skills**

2.28   The objectives of the nine-year basic education include enabling every student to develop his full potential in the domains of physique and social skills (see para. 2.2(a)(iii) and (iv) above). Students' participation in sports activities is conducive to the development of their potential in physique and social skills. Audit discusses the stakeholders' perception of achievement of the two objectives together in paragraphs 2.29 to 2.40 below.

2.29   *Audit's survey results.* Figure 5 below shows the respondents' (in Audit's survey) perception of the achievement of the objectives of primary education of enabling every student to develop to the full his individual potential in the domains of physique and social skills.

Figure 5

**Respondents' perception of achievement of
primary-education objectives of developing physique and social skills**

**(a) Enabling every student to develop
to the full his potential in physique**

Primary-school parents	51%	31%	13% 5%
Primary-school teachers	55%	31%	10% 4%
Primary-school principals	58%	30%	12%

**(b) Enabling every student to develop
to the full his potential in social skills**

Primary-school parents	53%	31%	10% 6%
Primary-school teachers	61%	30%	7% 2%
Primary-school principals	83%	15%	2%

0%   50%   100%

Percentage of respondents
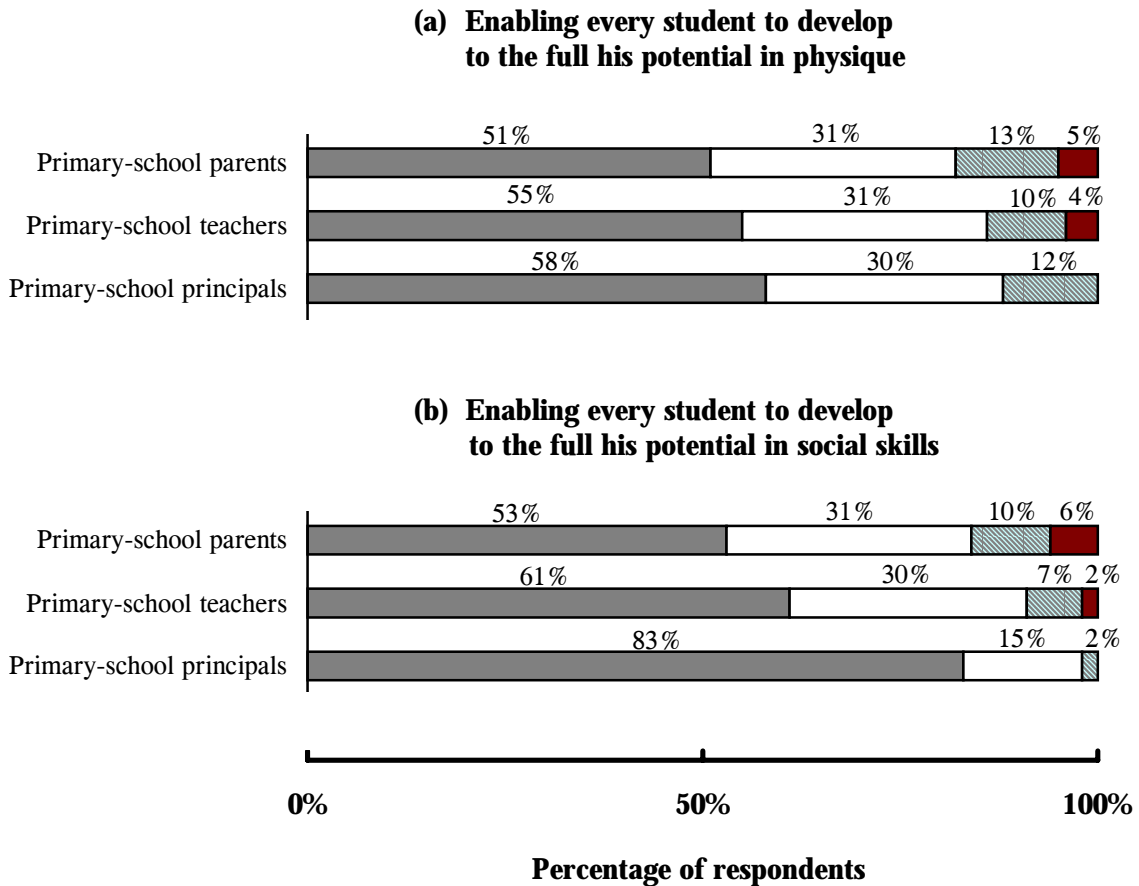
Legend:

☐ (grey) The objective was fully/largely achieved

☐ The objective was half achieved

☐ (hatched) Only a small fraction of the objective was achieved

☐ (red) Respondents expressed no comments

Source: Audit's survey

2.30   Figure 5 above shows that the majority of primary-school teachers and principals (55% to 83%) considered that, on average, schools had fully/largely achieved the objectives of primary education of developing physique and social skills, but only about half (51% on physique and 53% on social skills) of the parents held the same view.

**Activities for helping students develop
their potential in physique and social skills**

2.31   It is widely accepted that sports can help school-age children develop their confidence and social skills. The following are the major activities/events in which students may participate for helping them develop their potential in physique and social skills:

(a)   inter-school sports events in athletics, gymnastics, swimming, football, volleyball, basketball, badminton, table tennis and games, etc.;

(b)   inter-class/individual competitions in athletics, swimming, football, volleyball, basketball, etc.;

(c)   sports events organised by schools' interest groups and sports clubs; and

(d)   sports events/activities jointly organised by the ED, Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), Hong Kong Sports Development Board, local sports governing bodies, community organisations, Hong Kong Childhealth Foundation, Hong Kong Schools Sports Federation, etc.

The major events/activities are shown in Appendix B. Photographs 5 and 6 on the centre pages show primary students' participation in sports events.

2.32   ***ED's performance indicators on sports.*** In its report *"Education Indicators for the Hong Kong School Education System"*, the ED has shown the following indicators: numbers and percentages of secondary and primary students participating in inter-school sports events; numbers of students participating in inter-port sports events (among Hong Kong, Macau, Guangzhou and Fuzhou); and numbers of medals won in inter-port sports events. With subvention and support from the ED, the Hong Kong Schools Sports Federation organises inter-school sports events for schools.   The sports events include athletics, gymnastics, swimming, football, volleyball, basketball, badminton, table tennis and games. In 2000-01, 7.9% of the primary students (Note 5) participated in inter-school sports events. The ED has said that:

(a)   the percentage of students taking part in inter-school sports events is a measure of the sporting opportunities offered by schools for their students;

(b)   participation in such events is conducive to good health, good habits of physical exercise and a spirit of teamwork; and

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Note 5:   *The percentage of students included students of aided schools, government schools and private schools.*

(c)   such participation is also an indication of the health awareness of students.

2.33   ***Audit's survey on primary schools' participation in inter-school sports events.***   At Audit's meetings with the principals and teachers of seven primary schools, the principals/teachers of some schools pointed out that some primary students were quite self-centred and selfish, and that physical training could help improve students' academic performance, conduct and organisation skills.   In the light of the ED's performance indicators stated in paragraph 2.32 above, Audit conducted a survey on primary schools' participation in inter-school sports events.   Figure 6 below shows the distribution of primary schools (in Audit's survey — see para. 1.9 above) by the number of inter-school sports events (athletics, gymnastics, swimming, football, volleyball, basketball, badminton, table tennis and games) they participated in 2001-02.

Figure 6

**Distribution of primary schools by number of
inter-school sports events they participated in 2001-02 (Note)**
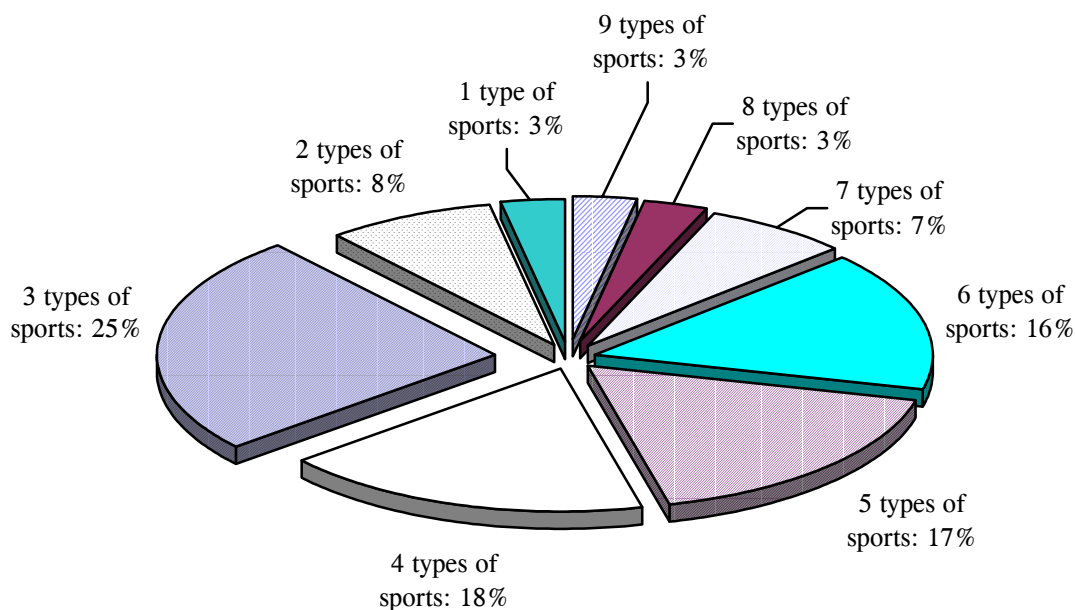
Source: Audit's survey

*Note: Primary schools normally participate in one or more of the following nine inter-school
            sports events: athletics, gymnastics, swimming, football, volleyball, basketball,
            badminton, table tennis and games.*

— 22 —

2.34   Figure 6 above shows that 13% (7% + 3% + 3%) of primary schools participated in seven to nine types of inter-school sports events. On the other hand, 11% (3% + 8%) of the primary schools only participated in one to two types of inter-school sports events.

2.35   *ED's response to primary schools' participation in inter-school sports events.* In response to Audit's observations in paragraphs 2.33 and 2.34 above and paragraphs 2.47 and 2.48 below, the ED has said that:

(a)   those students participating in inter-school sports, music and cultural events are normally selected by their schools because they are gifted in these fields;

(b)   not every student has reached the standards of competing at inter-school competition level; and

(c)   the organisers have to set limits on the number of entries from each school so that the competitions are manageable.

2.36   **Audit notes that some schools only participated in one or two types of inter-school sports events. Audit considers that the ED needs to encourage schools to provide their students with more sports activities, as has been suggested by the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) in paragraphs 2.38 and 2.39 below. Students' participation in such activities will, among others, help students better develop their potential in the domains of physique and social skills (see para. 2.2(a)(iii) and (iv) above).**

**Home Affairs Bureau's recommendations
for enhancing students' physical development**

2.37   To formulate a strategic blueprint for the development of sports in Hong Kong, in 2002, the Sports Policy Review Team of the HAB conducted a comprehensive review of the sports policy of Hong Kong.

2.38   In the report of the Sports Policy Review Team of the HAB of May 2002, the HAB stated that:

(a) in most primary schools, the curriculum typically provided for two sessions of physical education (PE) per week (each lasting 30 to 40 minutes), which represented about 5% of total curriculum time;

(b) if students were only making use of PE lessons for physical exercises, their activity level was far too low to gain health benefits through exercises;

(c) it had been found by a recent survey that 23% of boys and 10% of girls aged nine to 12 in Hong Kong were obese; and

(d) given the firm lead set by the EC report, there was a clear justification for schools to take a more focussed approach to the development of student sport activities.

2.39   In its report of May 2002, among others, the HAB recommended that:

(a) the Government should conduct comprehensive student fitness tests and publicise fitness "norms" for relevant age groups; and

(b) the Government should encourage schools to cooperate with the LCSD to make use of its sports venues.

2.40   **In order to help students better develop their potential in physique and social skills, Audit supports the HAB's recommendations stated above.**

Achievement of primary-education objective of developing aesthetics

2.41   One of the objectives of primary education is to enable every student to develop his full potential in the domain of aesthetics (see para. 2.2(a)(v) above). Audit discusses the stakeholders' perception of achievement of this objective in paragraphs 2.42 to 2.50 below.

2.42   *Audit's survey results.*   Figure 7 below shows the respondents' perception of the achievement of the objective of primary education of enabling every student to develop to the full his individual potential in the domain of aesthetics.

Figure 7

**Respondents' perception of achievement of primary-education
objective of enabling every student to develop to the full his potential in aesthetics**
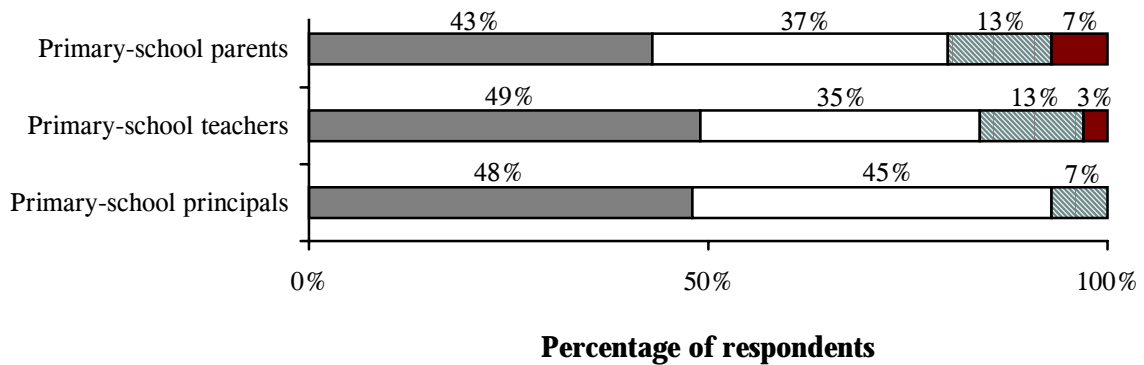
Percentage of respondents

Legend:

■ The objective was fully/largely achieved

□ The objective was half achieved

▨ Only a small fraction of the objective was achieved

■ Respondents expressed no comments

Source: Audit's survey

2.43   Figure 7 above shows that less than half of parents, teachers and principals considered that, on average, schools had fully/largely achieved the objective of primary education of developing aesthetics.

Activities for helping students develop their potential in aesthetics

2.44   It is generally accepted that students' participation in music and cultural events will help them develop their potential in aesthetics. Nurturing of students in aesthetics during their early age helps students develop their potential in different arts and cultural activities. The experience gained will help enhance their lifelong appreciation of the arts and develop their potential in the domain of aesthetics.

2.45   The following are the major activities/events in which students may participate for helping them develop their potential in aesthetics:

(a)   music, art and craft sessions in school curriculum;

(b)   inter-school events in music, speech, dance and drama; and

(c)   interest-group/school-club activities, competitions, exhibitions, training courses, instrumental classes, choirs, singing groups, orchestras, etc. organised by individual schools and community organisations.

Photographs 7 and 8 on the centre pages show primary students' participation in music and cultural events.

2.46   *ED's performance indicator on students' participation in music and cultural events.*   In its report *"Education Indicators for the Hong Kong School Education System"*, the ED has shown the numbers and percentages of secondary and primary students participating in inter-school events in music, speech, dance and drama as performance indicators.   In 2000-01, the percentages of students who participated in the inter-school events were:

	Percentage of students' participation	
Inter-school event	**Primary students (Note)**	**Primary and secondary students**
Hong Kong Schools Music Festival	–	12.8%
Hong Kong Schools Speech Festival	–	12.8%
School Dance Festival	1.3%	0.9%
School Drama Festival	0.5%	1.2%

Source: ED's records

Note: The percentages of students included students of aided schools, government schools and private schools.   The ED did not maintain separate data on the percentage of primary students participating in the Hong Kong Schools Music Festival and the Hong Kong Schools Speech Festival.

2.47   ***Audit's survey results.***   In the light of the ED's performance indicator stated in paragraph 2.46 above, Audit conducted a survey on primary schools' participation in inter-school music and cultural events. Figure 8 below shows the percentages of primary schools (in Audit's survey) participating in inter-school music and cultural events (music, speech, dance and drama) in 2001-02.

Figure 8

**Primary schools participating in
inter-school music and cultural events in 2001-02 (Note)**
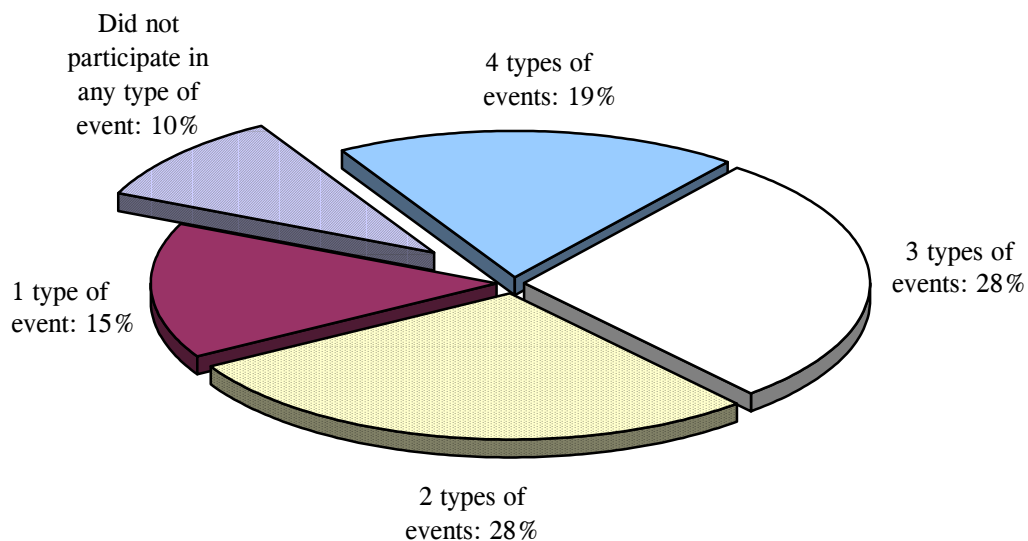
Source: Audit's survey

*Note: Primary schools normally participate in one or more of the following four
inter-school music and cultural events: music, speech, dance and drama.*

2.48   Figure 8 above shows that, while 19% of primary schools participated in all the four types of inter-school events in music, speech, dance and drama, 10% of the schools did not participate in any of the events.

2.49   ***ED's response to primary schools' participation in inter-school music and cultural events.*** In response to Audit's observations in paragraphs 2.47 and 2.48 above, the ED has said that:

(a)   in general, only a small proportion of students are selected to represent their schools in inter-school music, dance, drama or speech competitions; and

(b)   therefore, the number of participants in these competitions may not be representative of the quality of arts education in schools.

2.50   **Audit considers that schools should be encouraged to participate in more music and cultural events so as to provide more opportunities for their students to develop their potential in the domain of aesthetics (see para. 2.2(a)(v) above).**

Performance indicators relating to primary-education objectives

2.51   In September 2002, when invited to give comments on the draft Audit Report, the ED said that, in addition to the extent of students' participation in youth-club activities, sports, music and cultural events, and adoption of the activity approach to teaching (Note 6), other performance indicators for assessing the extent of students' development of their potential in the domains of ethics, intellect, physique, social skills, aesthetics, etc. are required. **Audit considers that the ED needs to develop appropriate performance indicators for schools to assess and report their performance in relation to the various objectives of primary education.**

Public accountability of primary schools

2.52   At Audit's meetings with the principals and teachers of seven primary schools, it was revealed that some of these primary schools did not disclose in their annual reports:

(a)   the number of students participating in the activities of individual youth clubs (5 out of the 7 schools);

Note 6:   *Students' participation in youth-club activities and more extensive adoption of the activity approach to teaching are the EC's recommendations (see paras. 2.9 and 2.22 above). Furthermore, the extent of students' participation in youth-club activities, inter-school sports, music and cultural events, and adoption of the activity approach to teaching are indicators included in the ED's report "Education Indicators for the Hong Kong School Education System" (see paras. 2.10, 2.23, 2.32 and 2.46 above).*

(b)   the extent of adoption of the activity approach to teaching in different primary grades (3 out of the 7 schools); and

(c)   the number of their students participating in inter-school sports (6 out of the 7 schools), music (5 out of the 7 schools) and cultural events (3 out of the 7 schools).

2.53   As discussed in paragraphs 2.7 to 2.50 above, the adoption of the activity approach to teaching, and students' participation in youth-club activities and sports, music and cultural events are conducive to the achievement of the objectives of primary education (see para. 2.2 above). **In order to enhance the public accountability of schools, Audit considers that the ED needs to ask schools to disclose in their annual reports their performance in relation to the ED's performance indicators on the achievement of the objectives of primary education.**

Audit recommendations on
achievement of primary-education objectives

2.54   **In order to better achieve the objectives of primary education recommended by the EC which have been adopted by the Government, Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Education should:**

(a)   **take action to identify those schools which do not provide their students with sufficient extra-curricular activities (e.g. activities provided by uniform groups, sports, music and cultural activities) and provide assistance to these schools to help them participate more in such activities (see paras. 2.17, 2.36 and 2.50 above);**

(b)   **take action to ascertain the extent of implementation of the EC's recommendation on more extensive adoption of the activity approach in individual schools (see paras. 2.24 to 2.27 above);**

(c)   **provide assistance to schools which are slow in adopting the activity approach (see paras. 2.24 to 2.27 above);**

(d)   **consider issuing good-practice guides to secondary schools to encourage them to take into account students' potential in ethics, intellect, physique, social skills and aesthetics when admitting S1 students, in addition to academic performance (see paras. 2.2 and 2.25(e) above);**

(e) **expedite action to implement the HAB's recommendations (contained in its report on Sports Policy Review of 2002) on conducting fitness tests for students and encouraging schools to make use of LCSD's venues to organise sports events (see para. 2.39(a) and (b) above);**

(f) **develop appropriate performance indicators for schools to assess and report their performance in relation to the objectives of primary education (see para. 2.51 above); and**

(g) **require schools to disclose, in their annual reports/school profiles, their performance in relation to the ED's performance indicators on the achievement of primary-education objectives (see para. 2.53 above).**

Response from the Administration

2.55   The **Director of Education** generally agrees with Audit's recommendations on the achievement of the primary-education objectives. He has said that:

Conduct of fitness tests for students

(a) the ED, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Childhealth Foundation and with the assistance of the Hong Kong Physical Fitness Association, conducted two surveys on the physical fitness status of local secondary and primary school students in 1998-99 and 1999-2000 respectively. The findings and the physical fitness norm tables derived from the surveys were distributed to schools and uploaded to the websites of the Curriculum Development Institute of the ED. According to the ED's survey, 19.7% of boys and 4.9% of girls aged six to 12 were obese;

(b) the ED will commission tertiary institutions to conduct a yearly survey of students' physical fitness and participation in sports activities from 2002 onwards;

Use of LCSD's venues for school sports events

(c) schools have made use of the LCSD's sports venues for many years. They can make advance booking of the venues and can enjoy a 50% concessionary rate for hiring the sports facilities during school hours. Other uses of the LCSD's venues include the

School Sports Programmes jointly organised by the ED, LCSD and schools, the Free Use Scheme of some LCSD's sports facilities, and the use of the LCSD's sports facilities for non-designated purposes, etc.; and

Performance indicators

(d)   the ED will consider developing more comprehensive indicators in the light of the major recommendations put forward in the CDC's document "Learning to Learn — The Way Forward in Curriculum Development" of 2001 and the ED's "Basic Education Curriculum Guide — Building on Strengths" of 2002.

2.56   The **Secretary for Home Affairs** has said that:

Youth-club activities

(a)   the HAB supports Audit's view that schools should collaborate with uniform groups to provide their students with more opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities. It is the HAB's on-going effort to promote activities of the uniform groups among the young people, parents and school authorities, and encourage and subsidise the expansion of the groups' membership. The HAB is currently providing subvention to nine of the eleven uniform groups. Another uniform group will be given subvention from April 2003; and

Use of LCSD's venues for school sports events

(b)   the LCSD has plans to expand its services in the School Sports Programme to meet the needs of all schools in Hong Kong so that more students can benefit through the Programme.

PART 3:   ACHIEVEMENT OF PRIMARY-EDUCATION OBJECTIVE OF STUDENTS' ATTAINMENT IN THREE CORE SUBJECTS

3.1   This PART examines primary students' performance in the three core subjects of Chinese, English and mathematics, and arrangements provided by schools and the ED to assist academically low achievers in primary schools.

Objective of attainment in three core subjects

3.2   One of the objectives of the nine-year basic education is to ensure that students attain the basic standards and encourage them to strive for excellence (see para. 2.2(b) in PART 2 above).

3.3   In most primary schools, teaching is mainly focused on three core subjects, namely Chinese, English and mathematics. In Audit's survey, Audit found that on average the primary schools used 61% of the teaching time (24% + 21% + 16% — see Table 1 in para. 4.22 below) on the three subjects (Note 7). This PART focuses on discussing primary students' attainment in the three core subjects.

Audit observations on primary students' attainment in three core subjects

Audit's survey results

3.4   Figure 9 below shows the respondents' perception of the achievement of the objective of primary education of ensuring that students attain the basic standards in the three core subjects of Chinese, English and mathematics.

Note 7:   *The remaining teaching time was spent on the subjects of general studies, arts, PE, IT, etc.*

Figure 9

**Respondents' perception of achievement of primary-education
objective of ensuring that students attain the basic standards in three core subjects**
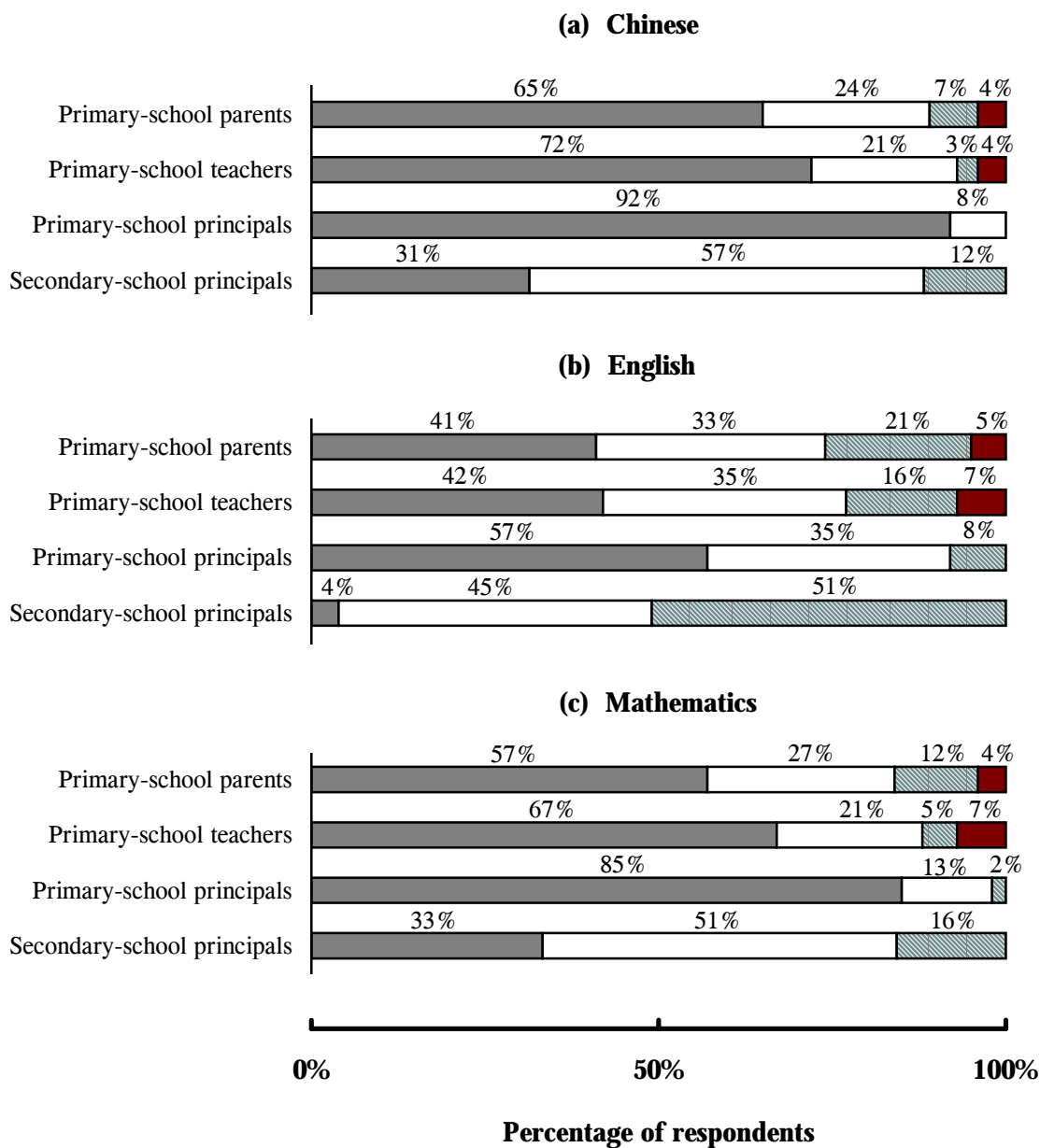
(a) Chinese

Primary-school parents	65%	24%	7% 4%
Primary-school teachers	72%	21%	3% 4%
Primary-school principals	92%		8%
Secondary-school principals	31%	57%	12%

(b) English

Primary-school parents	41%	33%	21% 5%
Primary-school teachers	42%	35%	16% 7%
Primary-school principals	57%	35%	8%
Secondary-school principals	4%	45%	51%

(c) Mathematics

Primary-school parents	57%	27%	12% 4%
Primary-school teachers	67%	21%	5% 7%
Primary-school principals	85%	13%	2%
Secondary-school principals	33%	51%	16%

0%   50%   100%

Percentage of respondents

Legend:
- The objective was fully/largely achieved
- The objective was half achieved
- Only a small fraction of the objective was achieved
- Respondents expressed no comments

Source: Audit's survey

3.5   Figure 9 above shows that:

(a)   the majority of the primary-school parents, teachers and principals considered that their schools had fully/largely achieved the objective of primary education of ensuring that students attain the basic standards in Chinese and mathematics;

(b)   less than half of the primary-school parents and teachers considered that their schools had fully/largely achieved the objective of primary education of students' attainment in English; and

(c)   only 31%, 4% and 33% of secondary-school principals considered that primary schools had fully/largely achieved the objective of primary education of students' attainment in Chinese, English and mathematics respectively.

3.6   Figure 9 above also shows that many secondary-school principals considered that primary students' standards in Chinese, English and mathematics were quite low. In this regard, 12%, 51% and 16% of the principals considered that, on average, primary schools had only achieved a small fraction of the primary-education objective of ensuring that students attain the basic standards in Chinese, English and mathematics respectively. A further analysis of the perception of secondary-school principals on the level of attainment of S1 students newly admitted to their schools in the three core subjects is shown in Figure 10 below.

Figure 10

**Secondary-school principals' perception of
S1 students' level of attainment in Chinese, English and mathematics**
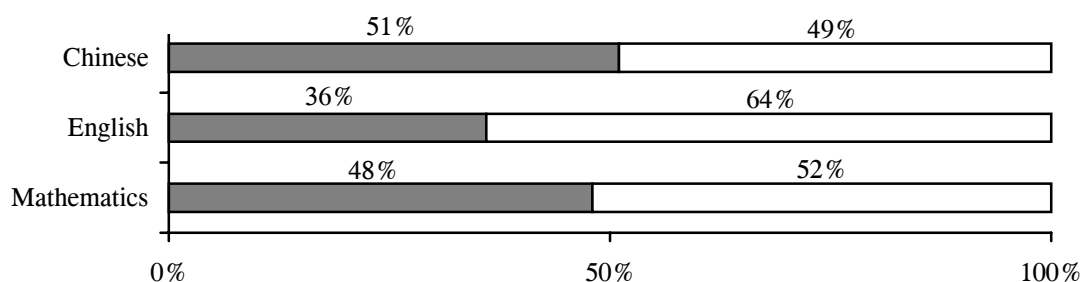
Percentage of S1 students (Note)

Legend: ■   S1 students who had attained P6 standard or above

                  □   S1 students who had attained below P6 standard

Source: *Audit's survey*

Note: *Principals of sampled secondary schools were each asked to estimate the percentages of their S1 students who had attained different levels in each of the three core subjects. This Figure shows the average percentages of S1 students as estimated by the secondary-school principals.*

3.7   Secondary-school principals generally have a higher expectation of the academic standards of primary-school graduates than their counterparts in primary schools. As reflected in Figure 10 above, in the views of secondary-school principals, the percentage of S1 students not attaining the P6 standard:

- in Chinese was 49%;

- in English was 64%; and

- in mathematics was 52%.

3.8   In Audit's survey, some secondary-school principals considered that there are some academically low achievers amongst the new S1 students. **In this regard, Audit notes that the ED has provided an Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme (IRTP) and a Resource Teaching Centre (RTC) service for the academically low achievers in primary schools (see paras. 3.9 to 3.11 below).**

Improvement measures for academically low achievers

3.9   ***IRTP provided in schools.*** Since 1983, the ED has provided additional teachers and grants to primary schools to run IRTP classes to cater for those students who have severe learning difficulties and require intensive remedial support to help them cope with the ordinary curriculum. In the financial year 2001-02, the ED spent $330 million on the IRTP. The IRTP classes provide intensive remedial teaching to students whose academic performance is two or more years behind the expected level of their grades in more than one of the three core subjects. Each IRTP class comprises eight to 15 students who may be studying in different primary grades. Schools normally adopt one or both of the following two arrangements to conduct IRTP classes:

(a) ***IRTP classes conducted outside school hours.*** Students requiring remedial teaching service attend normal lessons with normal curriculum. They only attend IRTP classes outside school hours (before or after school hours, or during lunch time). The duration of and arrangements for the lessons vary among schools; and

(b) ***IRTP classes conducted during school hours.*** During the core-subject lessons, students requiring remedial teaching service would withdraw from their normal classes and attend the specially arranged IRTP classes with students from other classes and grades.

3.10   In 2001-02, of the total 731 aided and government primary schools, 441 schools (60%) operated 773 IRTP classes. On average each school providing the IRTP service operated 1.8 IRTP classes. In the same year, 11,221 students were enrolled in the IRTP classes. On average, there were 14.5 students enrolled in each IRTP class.

3.11   ***RTC service provided by ED.*** For schools which do not have a sufficient number of students requiring remedial teaching service to justify the operation of an IRTP class, their students may attend special classes operated at one of the eleven regional RTCs (Note 8) run by the ED. Under this programme, during weekdays and outside school hours, students of half-day schools attend two sessions every week (each session lasts for two hours and covers all the three core subjects). For students of whole-day schools, they may attend one session on Saturdays on the three core subjects (each session lasting for two hours and 15 minutes covers the three subjects). In general, there are ten students in one RTC class who belong to the same academic grade. In the financial year 2001-02, the ED spent $16 million on this RTC programme. In 2001-02, the eleven RTCs operated 166 remedial teaching classes, and 1,975 students were enrolled in the classes (Note 9).

3.12   ***Students in need of remedial teaching service not being enrolled in remedial classes.*** Students are considered as being in need of intensive remedial teaching based on teachers' observation of their performance in schools. Hence, different levels of the Hong Kong Attainment Test (HKAT — see para. 3.23 below) may be administered to students in the same class. The HKAT results, together with other assessments and performance in the school internal examinations, help determine if a student is in need of intensive remedial support. These also serve as indicators for determining whether a student is ready for discharge from a remedial course. Figure 11 below shows the number of students in primary schools who were identified as requiring intensive remedial teaching, and the number of students enrolled in the IRTP and RTC programme in the past three years.

Note 8:   *The ED's eleven regional RTCs are located in Wanchai, Shaukeiwan, Homantin, Kowloon Bay, Yaumatei, Sha Tin, Kwai Chung, Tsuen Wan, Tuen Mun, Sheung Shui and Yuen Long. The centres are located in schools, government offices or rented premises.*

Note 9:   *The 166 classes provided 1,660 places (10 students per class × 166 classes). There were more students enrolled in the classes than the number of places available because some students withdrew during the term time and their places were taken up by other students. Moreover, some classes had more than ten students.*

Figure 11

**Primary students requiring intensive remedial teaching and
students enrolled in IRTP and RTC programme between 1999-2000 and 2001-02**
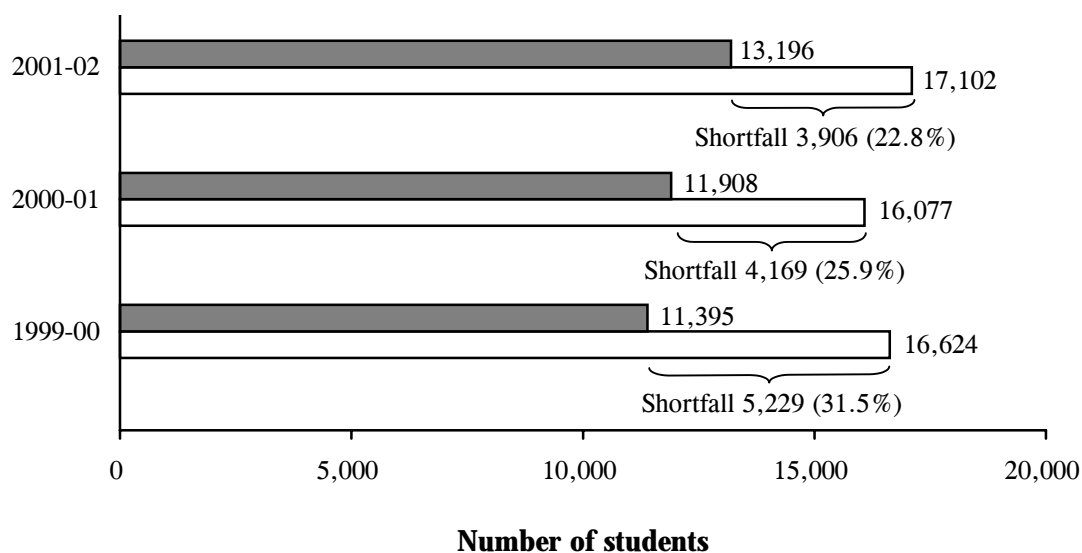
Number of students

Legend: ▣ Number of students enrolled in IRTP and RTC programme

☐ Number of students in primary schools requiring intensive
remedial teaching

Source: ED's records

3.13   **In 2000, in its proposals for reforming the education system in Hong Kong, the EC
stated that the education system should not give up on any single student, but rather let all
students have the chance to develop their potentials.** However, Figure 11 above shows that,
in 2001-02, 3,906 primary students who had been identified as being in need of intensive remedial
teaching could not attend the remedial classes provided under the IRTP or RTC programme.

3.14   Audit's enquiries with the ED revealed that the reasons for not enrolling some students
who required intensive remedial teaching in the IRTP or RTC programme were that:

(a)   some schools did not have a sufficient number of eligible students to form an IRTP class;

(b)   RTCs did not have sufficient places to accommodate all the eligible students (Note 10);

(c)   some parents did not want their children to attend IRTP or RTC classes because they did not want their children to be labelled as low performers; and

(d)   some parents did not have time to take their children to RTCs after school hours or during weekends.

3.15   In order to achieve the EC's goal that the education system should not give up on any single student, Audit considers that the ED needs to provide a sufficient number of places to cater for the needs of the students who are in need of intensive remedial teaching.

Students' performance in remedial classes

3.16   *HKAT attainment of students in remedial classes.*   The academic performance of students requiring intensive remedial teaching can be reflected by their performance in the HKAT. In 2000-01, about 2,000 P6 students in IRTP classes (Note 11) took the HKAT.   Their levels of attainment in the three core subjects are shown in Figure 12 below.

Note 10: *In 2001-02, the average waiting time for admission to RTCs was 4.6 months.   The number of places in RTCs and number of primary students who were on the waiting list for RTC service in the past three years were:*

As at	No. of available places in RTCs	No. of students on the waiting list	No. of wait-listed student expressed as a percentage of No. of students requiring RTC service
	(a)	*(b)*	$(c) = \dfrac{(b)}{(a)+(b)} \times 100\%$
31 March 2000	*1,610*	*239*	*13%*
31 March 2001	*2,030*	*592*	*23%*
31 March 2002	*1,660*	*660*	*28%*

Source: ED's records

Note 11: *In 2000-01, the number of P6 students in IRTP classes who took the HKAT were: 1,923 students attended Chinese language, 2,011 students attended English language and 1,989 students attended mathematics.*

Figure 12

**Level of academic attainment of P6 students in IRTP classes
as reflected by their HKAT results in 2000-01**
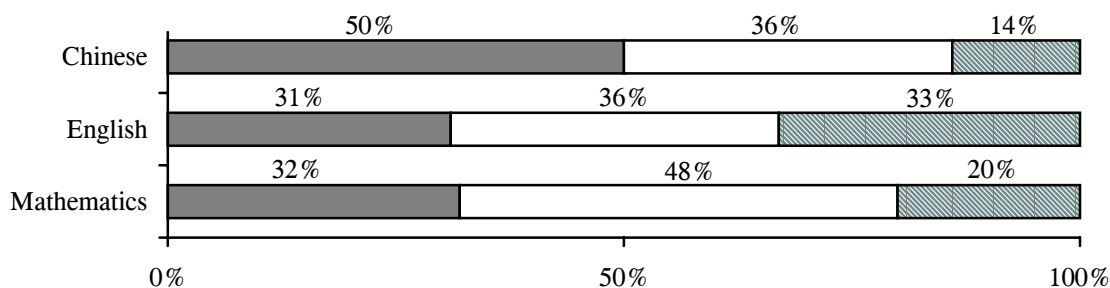
Percentage of students in IRTP classes

Legend:
- ▨ Students attaining P5 – P6 standard
- ☐ Students attaining P3 – P4 standard
- ▨ Students attaining P1 – P2 standard

Source: ED's records

3.17   Figure 12 above shows that a significant percentage of P6 students in IRTP classes only had very low levels of attainment in the three core subjects. For example, 33% and 20% of the P6 students only attained Primary Two (P2) or below level in English and mathematics respectively.

3.18   ***Students' discharge rates in remedial classes.*** For IRTP classes, students may be discharged from the classes if they attain the minimum standards in at least two of the three core subjects in the HKAT. For RTC classes, students are normally required to attain the minimum standards in all the three core subjects before they are discharged from the classes. Figure 13 below shows the discharge rates of the IRTP and RTC classes in the past three years.

Figure 13

**Discharge rates of IRTP and RTC classes
between 1998-99 and 2000-01**
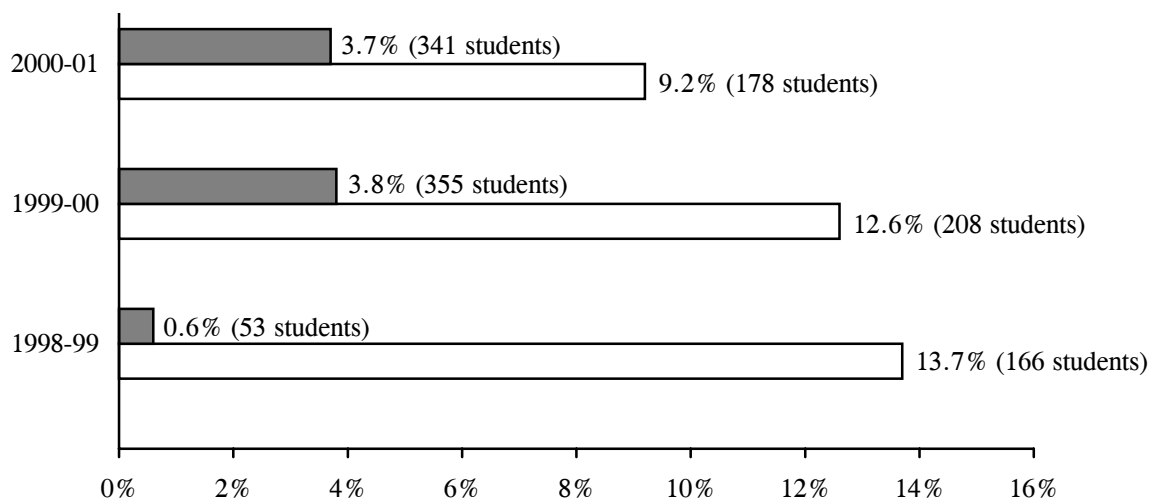
Percentage of students discharged

Legend: ◼ Students discharged from IRTP classes

◻ Students discharged from RTC classes

Source: ED's records

3.19   Figure 13 above shows that, as reflected by the discharge rates, students attending RTC classes performed better than those attending IRTP classes. Audit also notes that, in 2000-01, of the 412 primary schools (441 schools in 2001-02) conducting IRTP classes, 272 schools (66%) did not discharge any students from the IRTP.

3.20   During inspections of schools, the QAI teams of the ED (see paras. 5.44 to 5.46 in PART 5 below) noted that:

(a) despite resources given to schools to cater for the needs of the academically low achievers in the main subjects, there was only a slight improvement in students' learning progress;

(b) some teachers teaching IRTP classes had not received training on special education. Of the 39 IRTP-class teachers in 20 schools providing the IRTP service (which were inspected by the QAI teams in 2000-01), seven teachers (18%) had not received training in special education; and

(c) some teachers had difficulties in teaching students of different academic levels in one IRTP class.

3.21   In response to Audit's observations in paragraphs 3.12 to 3.20 above, the ED has said that:

(a) given that students in IRTP are having severe learning difficulties, and most of them only join IRTP at P3 or after, a high discharge rate of these students is not possible;

(b) these students would progress steadily in catching up one or two years in one or more of the core subjects, and in improving their attitude towards learning;

(c) both schools and parents are inclined to let their children remain in IRTP for continued support despite improvement in order to maintain their progress;

(d) in addition to formal training in special education, many seminars and workshops are organised by the ED to help serving teachers acquire new strategies in remedial teaching and handling students' special education needs;

(e) the assistance to teachers is stepped up through curriculum innovations, teacher networking as well as on-site consultation to teachers; and

(f) other than training in special education and knowledge of the subject curriculum and pedagogy, teachers' positive attitude towards IRTP and expectation of schools are also important factors affecting the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

3.22   **In view of the low discharge rates of students attending the IRTP classes, Audit considers that the ED needs to conduct a review to ascertain the reasons for the unsatisfactory performance of the IRTP classes with a view to identifying and taking appropriate remedial action.   In this regard, the ED needs to consider international practices that have been introduced to help students with learning difficulties.   The ED also needs to provide training to teachers for them to acquire the skills for teaching students in IRTP or RTC classes.**

HKAT results of primary students

3.23   Since 1976, the ED has developed the HKAT in Chinese, English and mathematics. The HKATs are norm-referenced and standardised tests which are administered to students in P1 to S3 classes. The ED collects sampled answer scripts for monitoring the territory-wide performance of students. Based on the sampled answer scripts, the ED compiles the norm tables and the average territory-wide scores in each of the three subjects and distributes them to schools for diagnosing students' strengths and weaknesses for early remedial and enhancement support by schools. In general, schools do not disclose students' HKAT scores to students and their parents.

3.24   The ED has not maintained records of students' HKAT scores of individual schools. Nevertheless, during school inspections conducted by the ED's QAI teams (Note 12), students' HKAT scores were obtained and summarised in the QAI reports. Based on the QAI reports, Audit compiled the average HKAT scores of P6 students in each of the 29 primary schools which were inspected by the QAI teams in 2000-01 (Note 13). The results are shown in Figure 14 below.

Note 12: *The ED's QAI teams conduct inspections of sampled schools to review the schools' management and organisation, support for students and school ethos, teaching and learning, and attainment and achievement. After each inspection, a QAI team compiles a report which, among others, shows the average HKAT scores of each grade of students in the three core subjects of Chinese, English and mathematics.*

Note 13: *In 2000-01, the QAI teams conducted inspections of 30 primary schools. Of the 30 inspection reports compiled by the QAI teams, 29 show the HKAT scores of the students in 1999-2000.*

Figure 14

**Average HKAT scores of P6 students
in 29 public-sector primary schools in 1999-2000
(By subject)**

Chinese
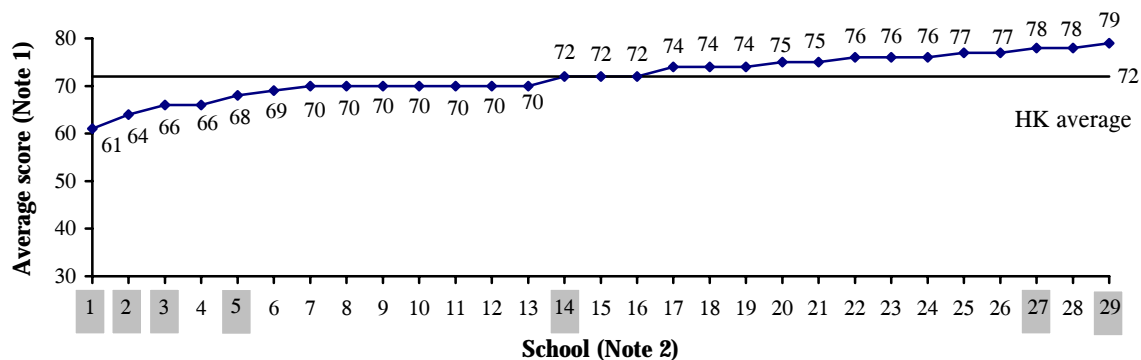
English
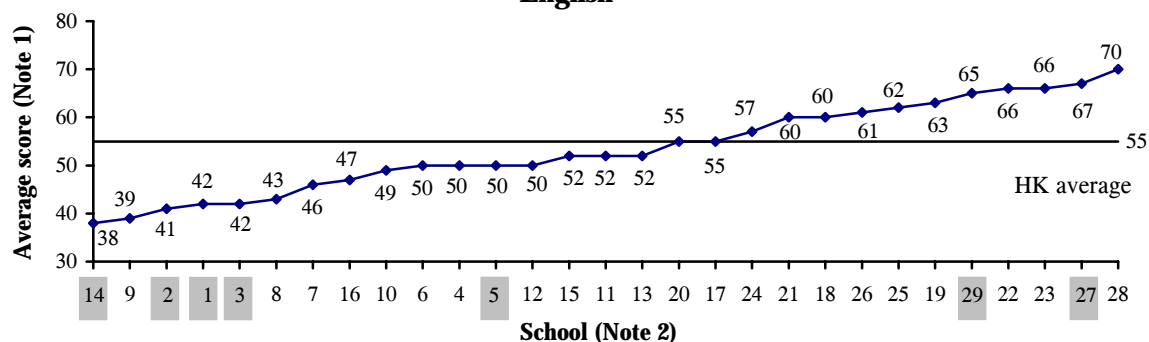
Mathematics
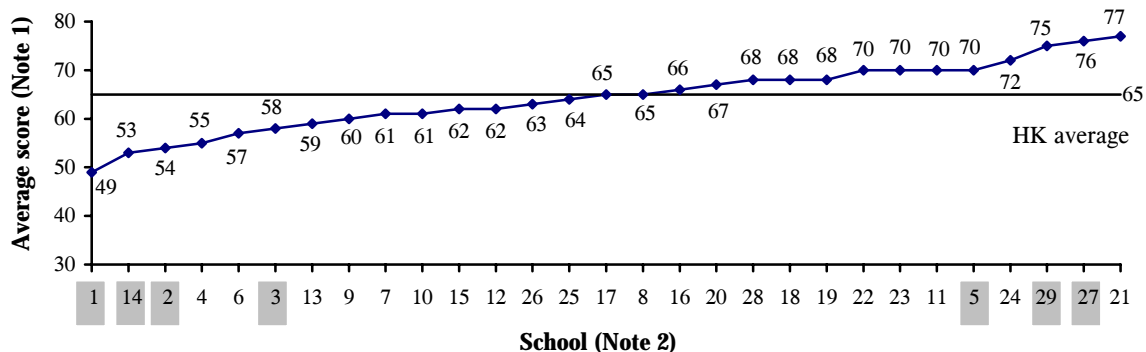
Source: ED's records

Note 1:   The maximum score was 100.

Note 2:   Each of the 29 schools is represented by the same school code in these three charts.

3.25   Figure 14 above shows that there were wide variations in students' academic performance among these 29 schools. The variations were particularly apparent in the English and mathematics subjects. For the English subject, the average score of students of the best-performing school was 70 while that of students of the worst-performing school was only 38. Students of the best-performing school in mathematics achieved an average score of 77 but students of the worst-performing school only achieved an average score of 49.

3.26   Figure 14 in paragraph 3.24 above also shows that:

(a)   some schools achieved relatively low average scores in all the three core subjects, such as Schools 1, 2 and 3;

(b)   some schools achieved relatively high average scores in all the three core subjects, such as Schools 27 and 29; and

(c)   some schools achieved a relatively high average score in one subject but relatively low average scores in other two subjects, such as School 5 (relatively high average score in mathematics but relatively low average score in Chinese and median average score in English) and School 14 (median average score in Chinese but relatively low average scores in English and mathematics).

3.27   In response to Audit's observations in paragraphs 3.23 to 3.26 above, the ED has said that:

(a)   the HKAT results do not provide the basic standards required of students in the three core subjects; and

(b)   the variations in scores among subjects in schools may be attributed to the difference in the test content/format.

Basic Competency Assessments in Chinese, English and mathematics

3.28   There has been a demand for an assessment system which would facilitate learning and teaching, and reflect and monitor the standards of the students in the three core subjects. To achieve this, the EC's report "Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong" of

Photograph 1

**Primary students participating in a youth-club activity
(para. 2.9 refers)**

Source: Schools' websites/reports

Photograph 2

**Primary students participating in a youth-club activity
(para. 2.9 refers)**

Source: Schools' websites/reports

Photograph 3

**Primary students attending a class using the activity approach
(para. 2.23 refers)**

Source: Schools' websites/reports

Photograph 4

**Primary students attending a class using the activity approach
(para. 2.23 refers)**

Source: Schools' websites/reports

Photograph 5

**Primary students participating in a sports event of table tennis
(para. 2.31 refers)**

Source: Schools' websites/reports

Photograph 6

**Primary students participating in a sports event of basketball
(para. 2.31 refers)**

Source: Schools' websites/reports

Photograph 7

**Primary students participating in a music event
(para. 2.45 refers)**

Source: Schools' websites/reports

Photograph 8

**Primary students participating in a dancing event
(para. 2.45 refers)**

Source: Schools' websites/reports

September 2000 has proposed to introduce Basic Competency Assessments in Chinese, English and mathematics to:

(a)   enable teachers and parents to understand students' learning needs and problems so as to facilitate timely assistance.   Apart from helping students attain basic standards, appropriate measures should also be implemented to help students develop their various potentials; and

(b)   provide the Government and school management with information on schools' standards in key learning areas so that the Government will be able to provide support to those schools which are in need of assistance, and to monitor the effectiveness of education policies.

3.29   The ED is in the process of implementing the Basic Competency Assessments, which will comprise two parts, namely Student Assessment and System Assessment.   The ED has commissioned the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority to design, develop and administer the Basic Competency Assessments.   The pilot run of the P3 prototype of the Student Assessment is being implemented in 34 schools from June 2002.   The Student Assessment will be fully implemented at P3 to P6 in all primary schools in June 2003.   The System Assessment of the Basic Competency Assessments is scheduled to be launched at P3 level in 2003-04, at P6 level in 2004-05, and at S3 level in 2005-06.   The Assessment will adopt a criterion-referenced approach.

3.30   Audit notes that the ED will make use of some form of assessment (such as the Basic Competency Assessments) to monitor the performance of primary students of individual schools in the three core subjects with a view to finding out the shortcomings of both students and schools and implementing appropriate improvement measures.

Students' reading habit

3.31   The promotion of reading culture in schools can result in two important outcomes in students' learning, and address two of the major concerns in education — language proficiency and learning capacity.   At Audit's meetings with school principals and teachers, Audit was advised that, in general, schools with good performance in English and Chinese normally had nurtured their students to form a habit of reading.   Many students in these schools normally spent about one hour or more daily on books and reading materials outside the school curriculum.   In a survey conducted by the ED in February 2001, it was found that a significant number of primary students spent less than two hours a week reading newspapers, leisure books and electronic information.   The results of the ED's survey are shown in Figure 15 below.

Figure 15

**Percentage of primary students
spending less than two hours a week on reading**

(a) Newspapers

P5 – P6 students	59%
P3 – P4 students	68%
P1 – P2 students	76%

(b) Books

P5 – P6 students	42%
P3 – P4 students	51%
P1 – P2 students	45%

(c) Electronic information

P5 – P6 students	53%
P3 – P4 students	74%
P1 – P2 students	78%

0%   50%   100%

Percentage of students
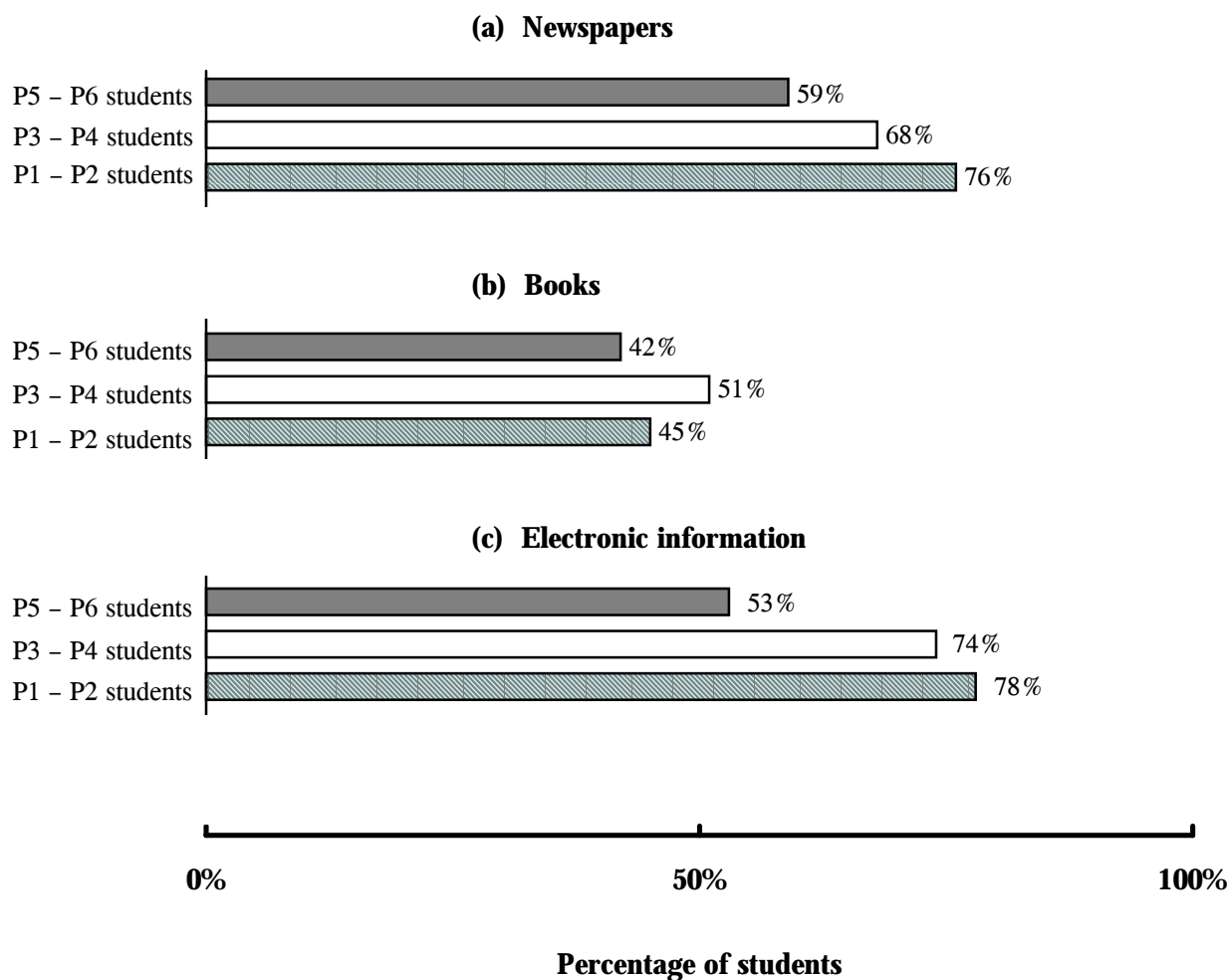
Source: ED's survey in 2001

3.32   ***ED's measures for nurturing students' reading habit.***   The following are the major efforts made by the ED for nurturing students' reading habit:

(a)   schools are provided with funds (e.g. the Operating Expenses Block Grant) that can be used to purchase facilities and reading materials for their students;

(b) the ED has established a cross-division Task Force on Reading Strategy. The Task Force has developed a coordinated action plan to support schools in promoting reading from within the curriculum to home level;

(c) the ED has encouraged schools to reflect their efforts in the promotion of reading in the school profiles to enhance parents' understanding in this area;

(d) in 2001-02, the ED published two major resource packages (which included good practices on school-based reading activities) and held three seminars to support schools to implement the "Reading to Learn" initiative;

(e) the ED has developed a "Reading to Learn" web page to facilitate resource and experience sharing among schools, disseminate good practices on promotion of reading in schools, and provide schools with useful information in relation to "Reading to Learn" initiative; and

(f) the Mobile School Library Service of the ED with support from Po Leung Kuk and LCSD provides 60,000 books to 125 schools to support the "Reading to Learn" initiative.

3.33 **Reading is important for students to broaden their knowledge, and develop their interest and ability for continuous and lifelong learning. In view of the fact that the majority of primary-school students do not spend much time in reading, Audit considers that the ED needs to take further action to provide appropriate facilities (e.g. books and reading materials) to schools and encourage them, drawing on the experience of the more successful schools, to nurture their students' reading habit.**

**Audit recommendations on primary
students' attainment in three core subjects**

3.34 **In order to ensure that students attain the basic standards and to encourage them to strive for excellence, Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Education should:**

(a) **take action to improve the coordination between primary and secondary-school principals so as to reduce their expectation gap, thereby facilitating the assimilation of primary students into secondary schools (see para. 3.7 above);**

(b)   **provide intensive remedial teaching to all students who need such teaching (see para. 3.15 above);**

(c)   **provide appropriate training to teachers who are required to teach IRTP or RTC classes (see para. 3.22 above);**

(d)   **conduct a review on the variations in students' performance in the three core subjects in different schools and, in particular, ascertain the reasons for students' relatively low level of academic achievement in some schools (see para. 3.25 above); and**

(e)   **take further action to encourage schools to nurture their students' lifetime reading habit (see para. 3.33 above).**

Response from the Administration

3.35   The **Director of Education** generally agrees with Audit's recommendations on primary students' attainment in the three core subjects. He has said that:

Provision of adequate intensive remedial teaching

(a)   the ED has planned to provide additional 60 IRTP classes (i.e. 900 places). The ED's RTCs have also extended their service to provide school-based support in the form of consultation to school teachers who are involved in remedial teaching. Schools can also make use of different resources, such as the Capacity Enhancement Grant, to support the learning diversity of students;

(b)   the ED's ultimate goal is to provide full coverage of students with special education needs. To achieve this goal, the ED is reviewing the funding model for children with special education needs. Through the streamlining of resources, setting up of a learning support team in each school and adoption of the whole-school approach, more effective and efficient support would be provided to students in need of special education services;

(c)   with the adoption of the whole-school approach and early intervention policy, students with diverse learning needs will receive timely support at school to help them achieve better in future. The ED will continue to support and monitor schools' service delivery to ensure quality outcome;

Training to teachers of IRTP or RTC classes

(d)   the ED anticipates that more elements on remedial teaching and student diversity will be included in the basic teacher education programmes to prepare the teachers for the expertise required;

(e)   the ED is presently working on a funding model and initiating a more effective mode in the delivery of support service for students with diverse learning needs. The ED will draw reference from international practices when designing the support model to suit Hong Kong's context;

Variations in students' performance in three core subjects

(f)   the ED is actively considering developing learning outcomes for Chinese, English and mathematics at the four key stages of school education (i.e. P1 to P3, P4 to P6, S1 to S3 and S4 to S6);

Students' reading habit

(g)   in September 2002, the Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower issued a letter to all primary and secondary school heads to highlight the importance of reading in students' learning, and to outline school-based reading-related strategies and the support measures to promote a reading culture in schools;

(h)   in 2002-03, the ED will conduct training courses for primary language teachers and teacher-librarians, provide development and professional support for schools to deliver a programme to assist parents of P1 and P2 students, and evaluate the "Learning to Read" and "Reading to Learn" strategies. The ED will also help schools set targets for improvement, and help them build district-based networks of key professional staff on the issue;

(i)   the ED will conduct research and development projects in collaboration with schools to pilot, in local contexts, some good practices of other countries on the development of students' reading skills and habits; and

(j)   the ED plans to merge the Chinese and English Extensive Reading Grants and the library book component of the School and Class Grant into a Reading Materials Grant for schools in the next school year for more flexible and effective use of resources to support the "Reading to Learn" initiative.

**PART 4:   STAKEHOLDERS' ROLES IN DELIVERY
               OF EFFECTIVE PRIMARY EDUCATION**

4.1   This PART examines the roles of teachers, schools and parents in the delivery of effective primary education, and suggests measures that can help these stakeholders enhance their contributions to the education and development of primary students.

Audit's survey on primary-school teachers' quality of teaching

4.2   Figure 16 below shows the perception of primary-school parents and principals (in Audit's survey — see para. 1.9 above) on primary-school teachers' quality of teaching in Chinese, English and other subjects.

Figure 16

**Respondents' perception of primary-school
teachers' quality of teaching in Chinese, English and other subjects**

(a) Chinese language

Primary-school parents	73%	21% 2% 4%
Primary-school principals	92%	5%2%1%

(b) English language

Primary-school parents	63%	28% 4% 5%
Primary-school principals	71%	27% 2%

(c) Other subjects

Primary-school parents	63%	29% 2% 6%
Primary-school principals	73%	25% 2%

0%   50%   100%

Percentage of respondents

Legend: ▨ Very satisfied/satisfied with the quality of teaching

□ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the quality of teaching

▨ Not satisfied/very dissatisfied with the quality of teaching

■ Respondents expressed no comments

Source: Audit's survey

4.3　　　　Figure 16 above shows that the majority of the primary-school parents and principals (63% to 92%) were satisfied with the quality of teaching of the teachers of Chinese language, English language and other subjects.

Audit observations on teachers' role in delivery of effective primary education

Teachers' commendation

4.4　　　　At Audit's meetings with the principals and teachers of seven primary schools, the principals/teachers of three schools pointed out that:

- most principals and teachers were very dedicated to and enthusiastic in their work and they spent a lot of their time and efforts in nurturing students; and

- the highly committed principals and teachers were conducive to the implementation of the education reforms and they generated momentum for the other less enthusiastic teachers in implementing the new education initiatives.

In Audit's survey (see para. 1.9 above), the majority (83%) of primary-school teachers said that their schools did not have sufficient arrangements for teachers' commendation.

4.5　　　　**Audit considers that one of the key factors for the success of an education system is the dedication of principals and teachers. Teaching professionals who are dedicated to and enthusiastic in education deserve encouragement which can be expressed in the form of commendation. This would help enhance their morale and improve the quality and effectiveness of education.**

Arrangements for teacher redundancy

4.6　　　　Mainly due to a decrease in the number of students enrolled, some primary schools experience reduction of classes. As a result, some teachers have been made redundant. Schools have adopted a "last in, first out" (LIFO) arrangement to identify teachers for laying-off due to the reduction of classes. The LIFO arrangement was recommended by the ED in the 1970s at the request of a teachers' union. Under the LIFO arrangement, when there is a need for making

teachers redundant, temporary teachers are made redundant first, followed by permanent teachers according to their length of service in the school. A permanent teacher with the shortest length of service (i.e. the teacher who is "last in") will be the first one to be made redundant. The ED requires schools to adopt the LIFO arrangement, unless there are very special reasons in support of a variation, such as when the "last in" teacher is a special subject teacher (e.g. music or PE teacher). In such cases, the "second last in" teacher would be made redundant. The ED would provide placement service to the redundant teachers by referring them to schools with vacancies for interview.

4.7   Audit noted that subsequent to the introduction of the school-based management (SBM) initiatives in recent years, schools had embarked on developing a fair and open staff appraisal system (see para. 5.33 in PART 5 below), which was not available when the LIFO arrangement was first adopted in the 1970s. **Audit considers that with the establishment of a staff appraisal system, schools are in a better position to assess teachers' performance which needs to be taken into account when deciding which teachers should be made redundant. Furthermore, the LIFO arrangement is at variance with good human resource management practices.** Under good human resource management practices, the merits of staff should be the determinants for staff retention. The LIFO arrangement has the risk of alienating good teachers and rewarding mediocrity.

**ED's QAI teams' observations
on curriculum and teaching in schools**

4.8   During inspections of schools, among others, the ED's QAI teams (see paras. 5.44 to 5.46 in PART 5 below) examine the curriculum and teaching of the schools. Figure 17 below shows the QAI teams' assessment of 30 primary schools' performance in the aspects of curriculum and teaching during the inspections in 2000-01.

Figure 17

ED's QAI teams' assessment of 30 primary schools in 2000-01

(a) Curriculum

Curriculum planning and organisation	30%　　　57%　　　13%	
Curriculum management	27%　　　53%　　　20%	

(b) Teaching

Teaching strategies and teaching skills	20%　　　77%　　　3%	
Attitude and knowledge	37%　　　63%	
Classroom climate	37%　　　63%	

0%　　　　　　50%　　　　　　100%

Percentage of schools
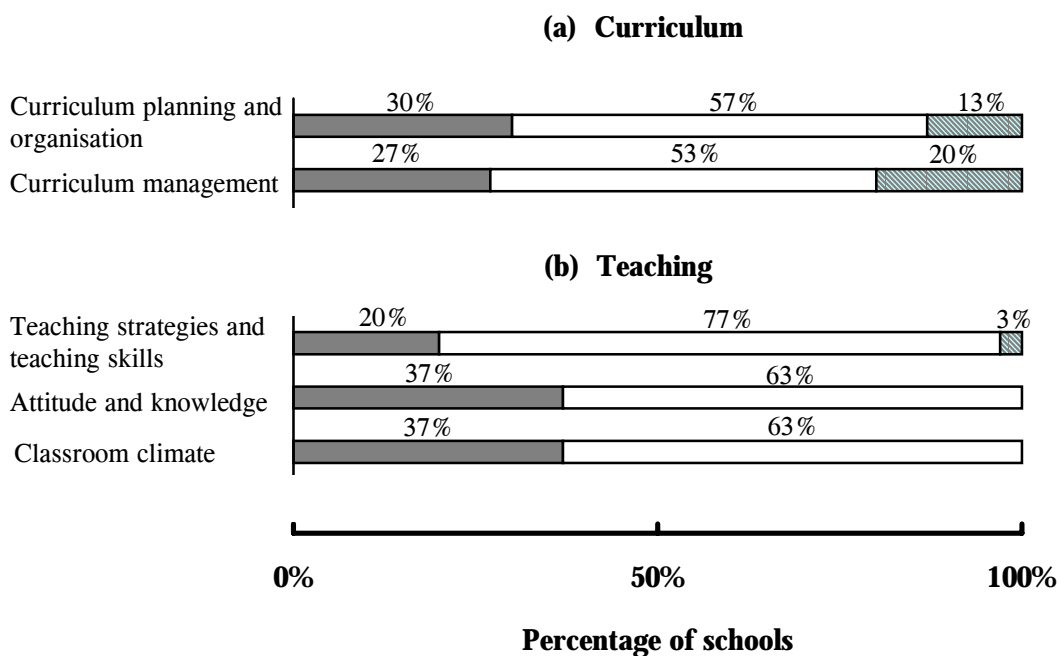
Legend (Note):　☐ Good

　　　　　　　☐ Acceptable

　　　　　　　☐ Unsatisfactory

Source:　ED's records

Note:　The highest rating was "Excellent".　However, none of the schools inspected by the QAI teams in 2000-01 was assessed to have attained an excellent level of performance in the aspects of curriculum and teaching.

4.9   Figure 17 above shows that, in 2000-01, the ED's QAI teams assessed that:

- the majority of the primary schools inspected had attained a good/acceptable level of performance in the aspects of curriculum and teaching (80% to 100%);

- in the aspect of curriculum, 13% and 20% of the schools inspected had attained an **unsatisfactory level** of performance in the areas of curriculum planning and organisation, and curriculum management respectively; and

- in the aspect of teaching, 3% (one school) of the schools inspected had attained an **unsatisfactory level** of performance in the area of teaching strategies and teaching skills.

4.10   The QAI teams' assessment reports stated that, in the past four years, schools' performance in the aspects of curriculum and teaching had been consistently weak relative to the other aspects of performance under inspection. In respect of the major weaknesses of the schools inspected, the QAI teams found that:

Curriculum

(a)   heads of subject departments did not take an effective leadership role in curriculum development and planning;

(b)   there were inadequate opportunities for professional development and exchanges among teachers;

(c)   there was a lack of effective monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the school curriculum;

Teaching

(d)   there was inadequate teacher-student interaction due to the adoption of a teacher-centred approach;

(e)   there was inadequate attention paid to developing students' skills, attitudes and creativity due to schools' emphasis on imparting subject knowledge;

(f)   teachers did not use effective questioning techniques to involve students in active discussions and inspire their higher-order thinking;

(g)   teachers had low expectation of the students' performance such that students' potential was not fully stretched;

(h)   teachers did not frequently use teaching aids, such as IT, to help enhance the effectiveness of teaching; and

(i)   teachers did not use a variety of teaching strategies and learning activities to arouse students' learning interest.

4.11   At Audit's meetings with the principals and teachers of seven primary schools, the principals/teachers of three schools said that:

(a)   they had little experience and knowledge for developing and designing the new curriculum under the all-round education, and they had attended very few training courses on the implementation of the new curriculum;

(b)   the ED's guidelines on curriculum development and design were too general. They could not merely rely on the guidelines to effectively implement the new curriculum;

(c)   they did not have sufficient time to attend training courses on development of teaching. They suggested that one way to facilitate them attend training courses was for schools to engage supply teachers to help discharge their duties when they attended the courses; and

(d)   they found professional exchanges among schools very useful in widening their exposure to new teaching methodologies. However, they seldom had the opportunities to take part in such exchange activities.

Training attended by teachers

4.12   The ED has provided a professional development programme for school principals and teachers in areas such as language proficiency assessment, use of IT in education, student guidance and curriculum reform.

4.13   In Audit's survey, it was revealed that, in 2001-02, on average, primary-school teachers attended four seminars on education. Figure 18 below shows the frequency of teachers (in Audit's survey) attending seminars on education in 2001-02.

Figure 18

**Frequency of teachers
attending seminars on education in 2001-02**

Attended 10 or
more seminars:
11%

Did not attend
any seminar:
12%

Attended 5 to 9
seminars:
23%

Attended 1 to 2
seminars:
30%

Attended 3 to 4
seminars:
24%
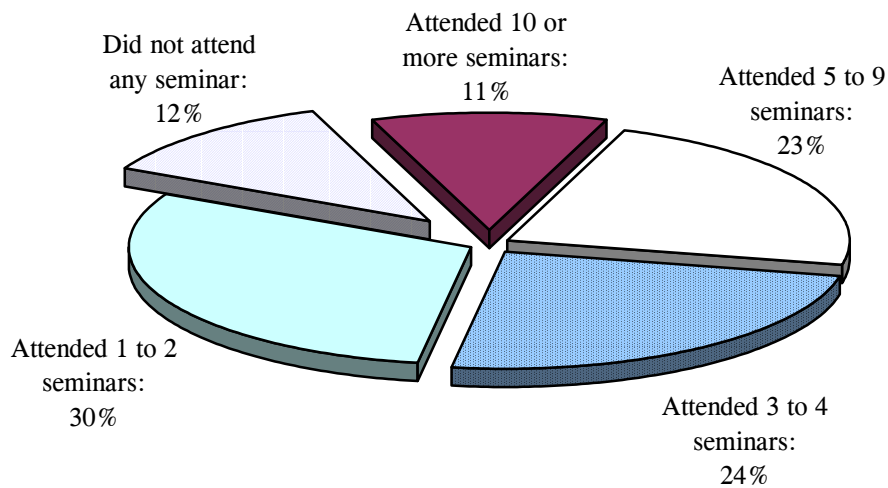
Source: Audit's survey

4.14   Audit's survey also revealed that, in 2001-02, on average, primary-school teachers attended 26 hours of training courses for teachers. Figure 19 below shows the training courses for teachers (in hours) attended by teachers in 2001-02.

Figure 19

**Training courses
(in hours) attended by teachers in 2001-02**
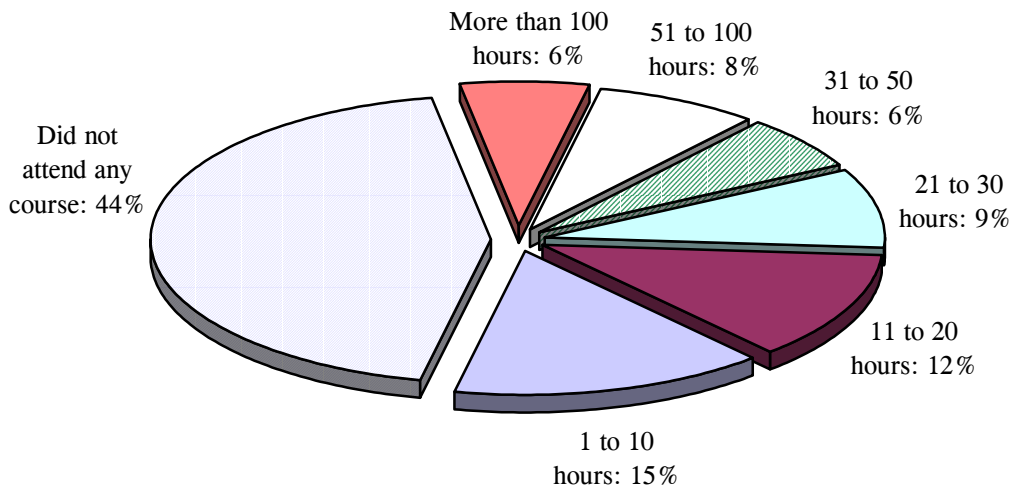
Source: Audit's survey

4.15   In 2001-02, 12% of teachers did not attend seminars on education (see Figure 18 above), and 44% did not attend training courses for teachers (see Figure 19 above).

4.16   In response to Audit's observations in paragraphs 4.11 to 4.15 above, the ED has said that:

(a)   day-release training programmes may encourage teachers to attend more training courses. However, the engagement of too many supply teachers in a school may affect the quality of teaching. It will also incur additional expenditure; and

(b)   the ED's Administration Circular No. 37/2000 on the Granting of Leave in Aided Schools explains the arrangements for granting leave for training purpose. The ED takes into account the leave element in the conduct of some of its training courses covering a longer period. A school is provided with a supply teacher to substitute a teacher on approved leave of more than two days, including leave to attend a training course.

4.17   **Audit considers that, in view of the challenges encountered by teachers in the adoption of all-round education in schools, teachers need to be given more opportunities to attend related seminars and training courses to keep themselves abreast of the latest developments in teaching techniques and methodologies. Audit also considers that teachers' participation in professional development, and implementation of new teaching strategies derived from seminars and training courses on education, should be integral components in each school's system of performance management.**

Audit recommendations on teachers' role in delivery of effective primary education

4.18   **In order to help teachers better contribute to the delivery of effective primary education, Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Education should:**

(a)   **consider abolishing the existing LIFO arrangement for selecting teachers to be made redundant (see para. 4.7 above);**

(b)   **ask schools to take into account teachers' performance when selecting teachers to be made redundant (see para. 4.7 above);**

(c)   **where appropriate, require schools to set out in their strategic plans targets and actions for improvements in (see para. 4.10 above):**

  (i)   **leadership in curriculum development;**

  (ii)   **teacher-student interaction techniques;**

  (iii)   **development of students' skills, attitudes and creativity;**

  (iv)   **involvement of students in active discussions to inspire their higher-order thinking;**

  (v)   **development of students' potential;**

  (vi)   **adoption of different teaching strategies and learning activities; and**

(vii) **development and design of curriculum under the concept of all-round education;**

(d) **encourage schools to arrange more professional exchanges among their teaching staff (see para. 4.11(d) above);**

(e) **ensure that teachers attend a minimum number of hours of professional training each year (see para. 4.15 above); and**

(f) **require schools to disclose in their annual reports/school profiles the frequency of their teachers' participation in seminars, training courses, and professional exchanges (see para. 4.17 above).**

Response from the Administration

4.19   The **Director of Education** generally agrees with Audit's recommendations on teachers' role in the delivery of effective primary education. He has said that:

(a) with effect from September 2002, all serving principals will have to attend 50 hours' continuous professional development per year; and

(b) every school has been requested to draw up its own policy for staff development in consultation with staff. In addition, a staff development committee should be set up to identify its own staff development needs and formulate staff development programmes. It is the responsibility of schools to nurture a learning climate and provide support and resources for staff development. As such, the emphasis is on the quality of the training courses/seminars concerned instead of the quantity of the teachers' participation.

Audit observations on schools' role in delivery of effective primary education

Allocation of lesson time

4.20   *EC's recommendations on school curriculum.* In September 2000, in order to help students lay a good foundation for lifelong learning and all-round development, the EC recommended that the curriculum for the nine-year basic education (i.e. primary and junior secondary education) should:

(a) focus on developing students' basic knowledge and abilities, including positive attitude and values, judgement, the capability for independent thinking, critical analysis and problem-solving, team-work, adaptability, creativity, organisation skills and communication skills;

(b)   be reformed to become more flexible, diversified and integrated. In this regard, schools should make flexible use of the learning time throughout the school year according to practical needs by:

    (i)   arranging learning time in terms of learning hours;

    (ii)   arranging project learning activities that straddle a number of learning areas which take place over several consecutive days or weeks; or

    (iii)   allocating several periods in a day for learning activities (such as field investigation/visit) that require more time, with a view to enabling students to experience an uninterrupted and comprehensive learning life; and

(c)   be reformed such that every student would gain a balanced exposure in all the following eight key learning areas:

    (i)   Chinese language education;

    (ii)   English language education;

    (iii)   mathematics education;

    (iv)   science education;

    (v)   technology education;

    (vi)   personal, social and humanities education;

    (vii)   arts education; and

    (viii)   PE.

4.21   ***ED's guidelines on allocation of lesson time.*** In June 2002, the ED issued a *"Basic Education Curriculum Guide"* for compliance by schools. Among others, the Guide states that schools should allocate lesson time for each of the eight key learning areas according to a range of lesson time laid down by the ED (see Table 1 in para. 4.22 below).

4.22   ***Comparison of existing allocation of lesson time with that recommended by ED.*** Based on the timetables of the 45 primary schools which were covered in Audit's survey, Audit analysed the allocation of P6 students' lesson time among the eight key learning areas. Table 1 below shows a comparison of the allocation of P6 students' lesson time among the eight key learning areas in these 45 schools with that recommended by the ED.

Table 1

**Comparison of 45 schools' allocation of P6 students' lesson time
among eight key learning areas with that recommended by ED**

Key learning area/particulars	Allocation of lesson time recommended by ED		Allocation of lesson time in the schools		
	Minimum	**Maximum**	**Lowest among schools**	**Highest among schools**	**Average of schools**
Chinese language education	**25%**	30%	**19%**	29%	24%
English language education	17%	**21%**	16%	**26%**	21%
Mathematics education	12%	15%	13%	21%	16%
Science education					
Technology education	12%	15%	11%	20%	14% (Note 1)
Personal, social and humanities education					
Arts education	10%	15%	8%	14%	10%
Physical education	5%	8%	3%	6%	5%
Others (Note 2)	–	–	1%	25%	10%
Flexible time (Note 3)	19%	–	–	–	–
Total	**100%**				**100%**

Source: Audit's survey and ED's records

Note 1:   The average lesson time for these three key learning areas included 11% lesson time for general studies, 2% for IT and 1% for civic education.

Note 2:   The time spent on "others" included time for assembly, class-teacher periods, counselling, library studies, reading, religious studies, prayer meetings, etc.

Note 3:   The ED's Guide states that schools should use flexible time to suit the specific needs of their students and their school context. If a school adopted the minimum lesson time for each of the eight key learning areas, it would have 19% flexible time for allocation to other areas of learning.

4.23   Table 1 above shows that, on average, the primary schools' existing allocation of lesson time among the eight key learning areas was largely within the ranges of lesson time recommended by the ED. However, there were schools whose allocation of lesson time fell outside the ranges laid down by the ED. For example, one school allocated 19% of its lesson time for Chinese language education, which was 6% (25% − 19%) below the ED's recommended minimum time. Another school allocated 26% of its lesson time for English language education, which was 5% (26% − 21%) above the ED's recommended maximum time. **In order to achieve the Government's objective of helping students lay a good foundation for lifelong learning and all-round development during their primary education, Audit considers that the ED needs to ensure that schools comply with the ED's guidelines on the allocation of lesson time.**

4.24   *Measures to ease "crowded curriculum".* As stated in paragraph 2.14(c) in PART 2 above, if more time was spent on one key learning area, a corresponding reduction in the lesson time for the other key learning areas would be required. (This dilemma may be referred to as "crowded curriculum".) **One of the approaches suggested to address the problem is for schools to deliver the curriculum by integrating one or more key learning areas together.** For example, teaching and learning in the Chinese and English languages can be integrated into arts education or personal, social and humanities education. Similarly, subjects can be embraced collectively through a thematic approach where a given theme can be made the focus for teaching some of the key learning areas. As an illustration, the study of "Dinosaurs" can be used as a theme to integrate teaching and learning into history, language and science.

Computer lessons in schools

4.25   The ED has provided computers to schools to enhance the teaching of IT in primary schools. In order to ascertain the extent of IT education in primary schools, Audit randomly selected for review one primary school from each of the 18 school districts of the ED (18 schools were selected). These 18 schools were independent of the 45 primary schools mentioned in Appendix A. Figure 20 below shows the frequency of computer lessons taught in 2001-02 in these 18 primary schools.

Figure 20

**Frequency of computer lessons
taught in 18 primary schools in 2001-02**
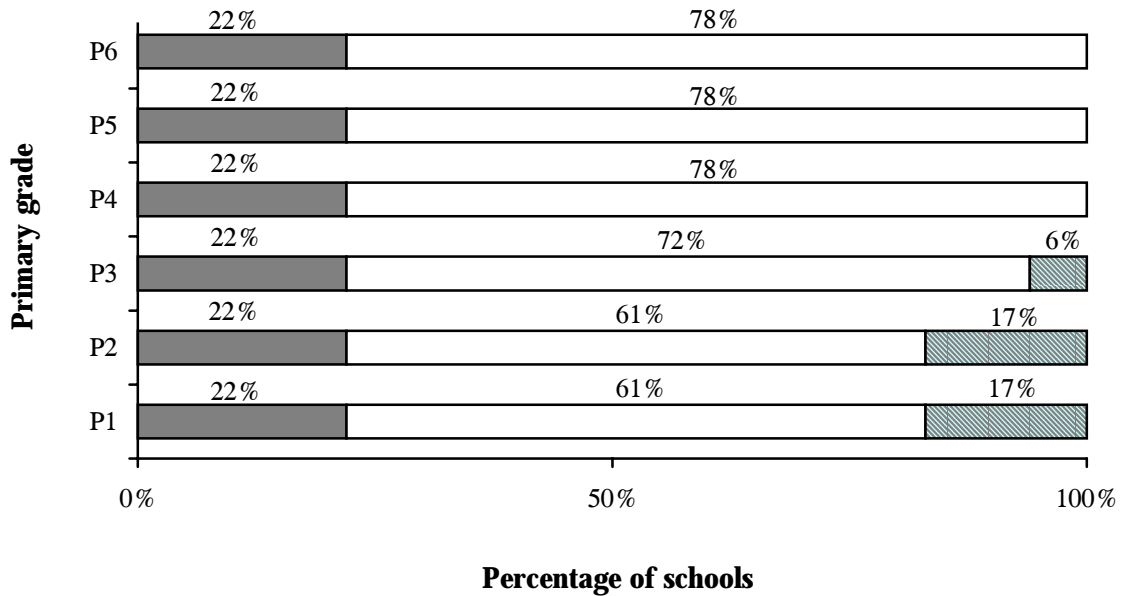
Source: Audit's survey

4.26   Figure 20 above shows that 22% of the schools provided two computer lessons to all grades of students per week. However, most schools (up to 78%) provided only one computer lesson to students per week, and up to 17% of the schools did not provide computer lessons to students in junior classes (P1 to P2). The ED has issued circulars to schools to encourage them to increase the use of computers in order to help students obtain the full benefits of IT in education.

4.27   In response to Audit's observations in paragraphs 4.25 and 4.26 above, the ED has said that:

(a)   computer studies or literacy is not necessarily a formal subject at all levels of a primary school. It is not advisable for primary schools to have independent computer lessons, particularly at lower primary grades; and

(b)   schools can adopt different approaches or modes to achieve the IT learning targets, such as integrating IT into different subjects, regular computer/IT lessons or extra-curricular activities.

Audit considers that the ED needs to ensure that primary students have early exposure to the use of computers across the curriculum. The ED also needs to provide schools with good practices on the use of computers in schools as a learning tool.

Students' homework

4.28   ***ED's guidelines on students' homework.*** In its guidelines issued in June 2002, the ED recommended that:

(a)   homework time-tables should be regulated through collaboration between the principal and different subject teachers;

(b)   teachers teaching the same class should coordinate their efforts to ensure that a balanced and moderate amount of work was given so that students were not unduly overburdened with homework on certain days of the week or cycle;

(c)   special attention should be paid to the total number of projects assigned;

(d)   **for lower primary students, the suggested time for written homework should not exceed 30 minutes a day;**

(e)   **for upper primary students, the suggested time for written homework should not exceed 60 minutes a day; and**

(f)   students should be encouraged to spend their spare time reading and developing positive interpersonal relationships with family members, peers, and friends.

4.29   ***Audit's survey on students' homework.***   In Audit's survey (see para. 1.9 above), it was found that P5 and P6 students on average spent about two hours every day on written homework. Figure 21 below shows the number of hours the P5 and P6 students surveyed spent on written homework every day.

Figure 21

**Number of hours P5 and P6 students spent
on written homework every day**
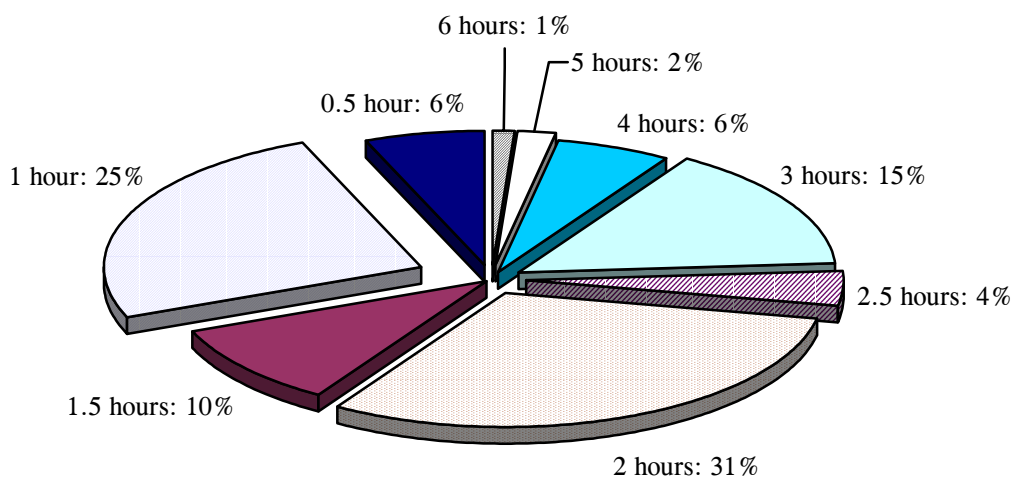
Source: Audit's survey

4.30   **The ED's guidelines state that upper-primary students should not spend more than one hour a day on written homework. However, Figure 21 above shows that 59% (31% + 4% + 15% + 6% + 2% + 1%) of P5 and P6 students spent two hours or more a day on written homework, with 9% (6% + 2% + 1%) spending four hours or more.**

4.31   In Audit's survey, the majority of parents (70%) considered that the amount of homework for students was appropriate. The majority of primary-school principals (82%) and teachers (74%) considered that the amount of homework should be reduced.

4.32   At Audit's meetings with the principals and teachers of seven primary schools, the principals/teachers of three schools said that:

- the main reason for assigning more homework to students was that parents wanted more homework for their children; and

- as teachers needed to spend much time on correcting homework, they had little time for preparing lessons.

4.33   **According to the primary-school principals and teachers interviewed, heavy homework for students may not be conducive to students' all-round development. Audit considers that it is necessary for parents to appreciate the importance of all-round development of their children and to strike a proper balance between all-round development and academic performance of their children.**

Audit recommendations on schools' role in delivery of effective primary education

4.34   **In order to help schools better contribute to the delivery of effective primary education, Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Education should:**

(a)   **ensure that schools follow as far as possible the ED's guidelines on:**

    (i)   **the allocation of lesson time among the eight key learning areas (see para. 4.23 above);**

    (ii)   **the use of computers in schools as a learning tool (see para. 4.27 above); and**

    (iii)   **the amount of time spent on written homework (see para. 4.30 above);**

(b)   **ask schools to disclose in their annual reports/school profiles:**

    (i)   **schools' allocation of lesson time among the eight key learning areas (see para. 4.23 above); and**

    (ii)   **schools' homework policy and the average time their students spend on homework (see para. 4.30 above); and**

(c)   **organise promotion campaigns to explain to parents the importance of all-round development of their children especially in early childhood education and the need to reduce their homework (see para. 4.33 above).**

Response from the Administration

4.35   The **Director of Education** generally agrees with Audit's recommendations on schools' role in the delivery of effective primary education.   He has said that School Management Committees (SMCs) and principals should have their discretion and make reference to the ED's guidelines when designing their schools' curriculum according to the ability and needs of their students.

Audit observations on parents' role in delivery of effective primary education

EC's recommendations on parents' role

4.36   In its report of 2000, the EC found that parents were the closest and the most reliable mentors to students, and they could help students learn effectively by:

(a)   according due emphasis to the concept of lifelong learning and all-round development and helping students cultivate this concept and interest in learning;

(b)   maintaining close communication and cooperation with schools to understand students' learning needs and their social life, and provide proper guidance to students at home;

(c)   participating actively in SBM; and

(d)   providing schools with manpower and financial support so as to reduce teachers' workload and help schools develop an environment conducive to all-round education.

Committee on Home-School Co-operation

4.37   As recommended by the EC in its Report No. 5 of 1992, the Committee on Home-School Co-operation (CHSC — Note 14) was set up in February 1993.   The CHSC is responsible for promoting home-school cooperation by:

Note 14: *The CHSC comprises a parent chairperson, two ex-officio members from the ED, seven educators drawn from kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, seven parents of children in local schools, one parent education worker and one psychologist.   The secretarial support of the CHSC is provided by the ED.*

(a)   conducting surveys;

(b)   allocating project grants to schools;

(c)   developing training materials;

(d)   publicising better home-school relations; and

(e)   encouraging the establishment of PTAs.

4.38   Since the establishment of the CHSC in 1993, it has conducted eight surveys (see Appendix C).   In 2001-02, the CHSC approved $9.2 million government grants for 1,683 home-school cooperation projects.   These projects included the setting up of PTAs and organisation of home-school cooperation activities.

Parent-teacher associations

4.39   **In 2001-02, of the total 731 aided and government primary schools, 644 (88%) had set up PTAs.   Audit considers that PTAs are important channels for interaction between schools and parents which contribute to the effective delivery of primary education.   In order to achieve the objectives of home-school cooperation, the remaining 87 primary schools need to set up PTAs.**

ED's guidelines on the role of parents in education

4.40   In the ED's *"Basic Education Curriculum Guide"* issued in June 2002, the ED stated that parents should:

(a)   support schools by helping in the school libraries, supervising lunches, participating in expeditions, arranging co-curricular activities in schools, giving talks at school assemblies, etc.;

(b)   communicate with schools about changes and needs of students, and develop a network of parents for the sharing of experiences in enhancing children's growth and learning and complementing the work of the schools in moral education; and

(c)   develop parenting skills that foster learning and personal development and a culture of parent participation in the school curriculum development process.

Audit's survey on parents' participation in school activities

4.41　　Audit's survey (see para. 1.9 above) revealed that only 11% of parents of primary students participated in some voluntary work for their children's schools.　The survey found that parents did not participate in schools' voluntary work because they:

(a)　　did not have sufficient time (84% of parents);

(b)　　had not been invited by schools (11% of parents);

(c)　　did not find suitable voluntary work to participate in (8% of parents);

(d)　　were unwilling to participate in such work (7% of parents); and

(e)　　did not have suitable channels to participate in the work (6% of parents — Note 15).

4.42　　It is widely accepted that parents' involvement in students' school education is conducive to students' performance in schools and their all-round development.　At Audit's meetings with the principals and teachers of seven primary schools, Audit noted that three schools had established strong cooperation with parents through PTAs.　In these schools, parents made significant contributions to the schools' activities, such as supervising students' activities when they arrived at school in the early morning and during lunch time, assisting in schools' open days and managing school libraries, helping teachers in students' outdoor activities, etc.

4.43　　Parents' participation in school activities contributes to student development.　As shown in paragraph 4.41 above, some parents may be willing to participate in school activities but do not have opportunities to do so.　Audit considers that the ED should ask schools to provide such opportunities and encourage parents to give more support to schools.　For example, parents can assist in the delivery of the activity-based curriculum.　**The ED needs to invite the principals of the schools in which the parents have participated extensively in the school activities to share their experience with the principals of those schools which have little parental participation. The ED also needs to organise more promotion campaigns (such as through the CHSC) to impress parents about the importance of parents' participation in school activities.**

Audit recommendations on parents' role
in delivery of effective primary education

4.44　　**In order to help schools foster more parental participation in the delivery of effective primary education, Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Education should:**

Note 15:　*The percentages do not add up to 100% because the respondents were allowed to give multiple answers to the questions.*

(a) **ask the 87 primary schools which have not set up a PTA to set up one (see para. 4.39 above);**

(b) **invite principals and parents to share the experience of parents' participation in school activities with other schools (see para. 4.43 above); and**

(c) **organise promotion campaigns to convey to parents the importance of participation in their children's school activities (see para. 4.43 above).**

Response from the Administration

4.45 The **Director of Education** agrees with Audit's recommendations on parents' role in the delivery of effective primary education. He has said that:

(a) it is the ED's aim that all aided and government schools would set up PTAs. In respect of promoting the setting-up of PTAs, the CHSC will continue to provide subsidies to PTAs through the Home-School Co-operation Project Grants and to organise training courses and good-practice sharing seminars for all PTA members;

(b) in 2001-02, a working group named PTA Support was formed under the CHSC. It aims at encouraging schools to set up PTAs and giving assistance to existing PTAs. Recently, the working group has published a new PTA handbook providing useful guide to schools which are going to set up PTAs;

(c) in 2000-01 and 2001-02, the CHSC has organised two annual campaigns on Learning Family. The aim is to encourage parents to learn together with their children. In 2002-03, the CHSC will focus the disbursement of Home-School Co-operation Project Grants on activities for fostering school education; and

(d) the CHSC will collaborate with the ED's Parent Education Implementation Team to organise seminars/workshops to promote quality home-school cooperation and interface, to build up the capacity of schools to work closely with parents, to convey to parents the importance of home-school cooperation, and to encourage parents to participate more actively both in school management and in their children's education.

**PART 5: ED'S MONITORING OF DELIVERY
                OF EFFECTIVE PRIMARY EDUCATION**

5.1   This PART examines the ED's monitoring of the delivery of effective primary education through the SBM initiatives, and the arrangements for conducting QAIs by the ED.

Background

5.2   The ED is responsible for monitoring the performance of schools to ensure that they deliver quality education in a cost-effective manner to meet the needs of students and society. As far as schools are concerned, they need to be accountable to the Government for the effective use of public funds and to parents and students for the quality of the education they provide.

School-based management initiatives

5.3   SBM initiatives aim to devolve more responsibilities to schools. Under the initiatives, schools are given greater flexibility, autonomy and accountability in the management and use of resources, and development of school programmes.

SBM initiatives recommended in 1991

5.4   In 1989, the EMB and the ED conducted a study of the role and relationships of those involved in the delivery of education in schools. In their report *"Setting the framework for quality in Hong Kong schools"* of early 1991, the EMB and the ED stated that the emphasis in the ED's relations with the aided-school sector should change from detailed control to support and advice, within a framework defining responsibilities and accountabilities at all levels in the education system. A set of SBM initiatives was recommended as follows:

(a)   each school should produce an annual school plan to guide its activities during the year, and an annual school profile covering its activities in the previous year and detailing school performance in a number of key areas;

(b)   every SMC should be required, under Education Regulation 75, to prepare a constitution setting out the aims and objectives of the school and the procedures and practices by which it would be managed;

(c)   school management frameworks should allow for participation in decision making, according to formal procedures, by all concerned parties including all teaching staff, the principal, the SMC, and (to an appropriate degree) parents and students; and

(d)   formal staff performance appraisal procedures should be required in all aided schools.

SBM initiatives recommended in 1997

5.5   Six years after schools were invited to implement the SBM initiatives in 1991, up to 1997, many schools had not fully implemented the initiatives. Subsequently, in its Report No. 7 of 1997, the EC recommended that, to develop quality education, all schools should have put in place SBM by the year 2000. The EC said that, under SBM, schools should develop formal procedures for setting school goals and evaluating progress towards these goals. The SBM initiatives recommended by the EC in 1997 included the following:

(a)   provision of documents outlining the schools' profiles, development plans and budgets, and means of evaluating progress;

(b)   preparation of written constitutions for the SMCs;

(c)   participation of teachers, parents and alumni in school management, development planning, evaluation and decision making; and

(d)   development of formal procedures and resources for staff appraisal and staff development according to teachers' needs.

Advisory Committee on School-based
Management's recommendations in 2000

5.6   Following the introduction of the SBM initiatives, in December 1998, the Director of Education appointed an Advisory Committee on School-based Management (ACSBM) to examine, among other things, the governance framework of schools. The ACSBM considered that the provision of quality education depended on the cooperation among the key stakeholders (e.g. school sponsoring bodies, principals, teachers and parents) in a school community and the vigour with which they pursued their individual responsibilities. The ACSBM stated that changes should be directed at SMCs and should involve all the key stakeholders in the management of schools.

5.7   In March 2001, the ED accepted the ACSBM's recommendations on the school governance framework. The major recommendations included the following:

(a)   each school should have its own SMC responsible for decisions on major school policies, procedures and practices. **The SMC should draft its own constitution, stipulating the composition and responsibilities of the SMC and the ways in which the school would be managed.** The composition of the SMC should consist of:

   (i)   managers nominated by the school sponsoring body (up to 60% of the total membership);

   (ii)   the principal;

   (iii)   teacher managers (one or more);

   (iv)   parent managers (one or more);

   (v)   alumni managers (one or more); and

   (vi)   independent managers (one or more);

(b)   each manager should in principle serve **no more than five schools.** The Director of Education will, in the case of specially warranted circumstances, have the discretion to lift the ceiling; and

(c)   schools should be allowed a transition period of up to five years to adopt the proposed governance framework. However, schools should be encouraged to move faster if they are ready to implement the proposed framework.

5.8   An Education (Amendment) Bill on the school governance framework which incorporates the ACSBM's recommendations is being prepared by the Government. In September 2002, in response to Audit's enquiries, the ED said that:

(a)   it intended to submit the Education (Amendment) Bill to the Legislative Council in November 2002;

(b)   since September 1991, the ED had encouraged and invited schools to implement the SBM initiatives, and schools' implementation of the initiatives was on a voluntary basis;

(c)   a few years after 1991, the experience gained from the implementation of the SBM initiatives suggested that the block-grant arrangements and other flexible measures in school management would help schools achieve school-based goals and formulate long-term plans; and

(d)   the implementation of the EC's recommendations of 1997 on the governance framework had yet to be finalised, pending the enactment of the Education (Amendment) Bill.

Audit observations on implementation of SBM initiatives

5.9   Based on the recommendations of the EMB and ED made in 1991, the EC's recommendations made in 1997, and the ACSBM's recommendations made in 2000, the SBM initiatives can broadly be grouped into four main categories. Audit has examined the implementation of the four categories of initiatives as follows:

Category of SBM initiative	Paragraphs
(a) Compilation of school plans, reports and profiles	5.10 to 5.17
(b) Preparation of written constitutions for SMCs	5.18 to 5.21
(c) Teachers, parents and alumni's participation in SMCs	5.22 to 5.32
(d) Staff appraisal and staff development	5.33 to 5.41

Compilation of school plans, reports and profiles

5.10   ***ED's guidelines on school plans, reports and profiles.*** In early 1999, the ED issued guidelines to schools for submission of school plans, reports and profiles to the ED every year. According to the ED's guidelines:

(a)   an annual school plan should:

      (i)   outline the short-term and long-term goals and priority development areas;

      (ii)   set out specific targets for implementation;

      (iii)   indicate means of evaluating progress during the year; and

      (iv)   include school budgets;

(b)   an annual school report should:

      (i)   make an evaluation of schools' performance; and

      (ii)   set out improvement targets for the following year; and

(c)   a school profile should:

      (i)   include information on enrolment, class organisation, teacher-student ratio, a profile of the teaching staff (which includes qualifications and experience), time-tabling arrangements, homework policy, medium of instruction and extra-curricular activities;

      (ii)   highlight schools' motto/values and any other distinguished features; and

      (iii)   be made available to parents.

5.11   To provide resources to schools for implementing the SBM initiatives, the ED has provided schools with:

(a)   a one-off grant of $2,000 per class;

(b)   a recurrent grant of $3,323 per school a year for related staff training and staff development programmes;

(c)   a recurrent grant of $198 per class a year to cover the costs for the production of the required documents; and

(d)   a supplementary grant ranging from $86,340 to $143,900 per school per year for clerical and executive support services.

5.12   The total financial resources provided to all primary schools for implementing the SBM initiatives amounted to:

- $0.3 million in respect of item (a) in paragraph 5.11 above in the 2000-01 financial year (no one-off grants were made in the 2001-02 financial year); and

- $83.7 million in respect of items (b), (c) and (d) in paragraph 5.11 above in the 2001-02 financial year.

5.13   In November 2000, the ED issued guidelines to schools which, among others, stated that schools' annual plans and reports should be made available for the perusal of parents, teachers and members of the public. Starting from 2000-01, the majority of the schools have submitted their annual school plans, annual reports and school profiles to the ED (Note 16).

5.14   ***QAI teams' observations on school plans, reports and profiles.*** In 2000-01, after inspecting the school plans, reports and profiles prepared by 30 primary schools, the ED's QAI teams observed that self-evaluation (see para. 5.10(b)(i) above) was a relatively weak area of the schools inspected. The main observations included:

(a)   13% of the schools inspected were rated as performing unsatisfactorily on "evaluation tools and procedures";

(b)   only 27% of the schools inspected had actively involved their staff in conducting evaluation; and

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Note 16:   *Up to June 2002, of all public-sector primary schools, one school had not submitted its annual school plan, eight schools had not submitted their annual reports and eight schools had not submitted their school profiles for 2001-02.*

(c) 13% of the schools were rated as having unsatisfactory performance on "reporting and action".

5.15 The ED has organised training courses, seminars, workshops and experience-sharing sessions to help schools develop SBM. Handbooks, manuals, training packages and reference materials are also made available at the ED's School Management Initiative Resource Centre. Notwithstanding the training and facilities provided on SBM, some schools have not performed satisfactorily. **Audit considers that the ED needs to give appropriate guidance to these schools with a view to helping them compile useful and comprehensive plans, reports and profiles for the information of the public.**

5.16 ***Audit's survey results.*** In Audit's survey, it was found that:

(a) 49% of the schools had distributed their annual school plans (in summary form) to parents;

(b) 65% of the schools had distributed their annual reports and school profiles (either in full or in summary form) to parents;

(c) 93% of the schools had school websites for disseminating school information and they had uploaded their school profiles onto their websites;

(d) 25% of the schools had uploaded their annual reports onto their websites; and

(e) 18% of the schools had uploaded their annual school plans onto their websites.

5.17 It can be seen from paragraph 5.16 above that many schools have uploaded onto their websites their school plans, reports and profiles, and distributed these in summary form to parents. These are good practices which improve transparency and enhance public accountability of schools. **Audit considers that the ED needs to promulgate these practices for adoption by all schools because websites facilitate the efficient dissemination of school information to the public.**

Preparation of written constitutions for SMCs

5.18 ***Requirements under the Education Ordinance.*** According to sections 32 and 33 of the Education Ordinance, every school has to set up an SMC. An SMC is set up for ensuring that:

(a)   the school is managed satisfactorily;

(b)   the education of the students is promoted in a proper manner; and

(c)   the Education Ordinance is complied with.

5.19   ***Written SMC constitutions.***   According to the ACSBM, an SMC constitution needs to address the:

(a)   composition of the SMC and its membership;

(b)   appointment of different categories of managers and their tenure; and

(c)   requirements for the frequency of SMC meetings and their proceedings.

5.20   ***Preparations of written SMC constitutions by schools.***   Audit notes that, up to 30 June 2002 (date of completion of audit field work), of the 731 aided and government primary schools, 146 schools (20%) had submitted their SMC constitutions to the ED for approval.

5.21   In July 2002, in response to Audit's enquiries, the ED said that:

(a)   in accordance with the Education Regulation, the submission of SMC constitution for the approval of the ED was not compulsory but at the discretion of the ED. Some schools might have embarked on drafting their SMC constitutions without notifying the ED; and

(b)   the Education (Amendment) Bill on school governance framework (see para. 5.8 above) was being prepared which would require schools to comply with the requirements on SMC constitutions.

In view of the important functions of SMC constitutions (see para. 5.19 above), Audit considers that the ED needs to expedite action to require all schools to prepare SMC constitutions and submit them to the ED for approval.

Teachers, parents and alumni's participation in SMCs

5.22   ***Requirements under the Education Ordinance.***   The Education Ordinance does not specify the membership of an SMC or how an SMC should operate.   It only requires that one member of the SMC is appointed to the position of school supervisor.   On behalf of the SMC, the supervisor monitors the operation of the school and is the person legally responsible for the school's compliance with the Education Ordinance.

5.23   ***ED's guidelines on teachers, parents and alumni's participation in SMCs.***   In the guidelines issued in January 1999, the ED stated that there should be formal participation of teachers, parents and, where appropriate, alumni in the school decision-making process and management.

5.24   ***Schools' compliance with SMC membership requirement.***   In April 2002, the ED conducted a survey on membership of SMCs.   The ED found that, of the 541 aided and government primary schools (Note 17):

(a)   in 110 (20%) schools, **teachers** participated in their SMCs;

(b)   in 83 (15%) schools, **parents** participated in their SMCs; and

(c)   in 48 (9%) schools, **alumni** participated in their SMCs.

5.25   Audit considers that the formal participation of teachers, parents and alumni in SMCs ensures that the interests of all key stakeholders are duly considered in the management and development of a school.   For instance, under such an arrangement, parents are able to raise concerns and give advice on the development of the school and education of students.   Furthermore, the principal, teachers and alumni are able to contribute their specific expertise and experience to the development of the school.

5.26   **As shown in paragraphs 5.23 and 5.24 above, three years after the ED had issued guidelines to schools, up to June 2002, only 9% to 20% of the primary schools had complied with one or more of the ED's requirements on the SMC membership.   To enhance the**

Note 17:   *In the ED's survey, the ED counted the a.m. and p.m. sessions of a school under one registration as one school.   Therefore, the total number of aided and government primary schools is different from that stated in paragraph 1.3 in PART 1 above.*

participatory decision-making process in schools, Audit considers that the ED needs to take early action to ensure that the membership of the SMCs includes all the key stakeholders.

5.27   ***SMC members serving many schools.***   The ED has accepted the ACSBM's recommendation that each SMC member (or school manager) should in principle serve no more than five schools (see para. 5.7(b) above).   To ascertain the extent of compliance with this requirement, Audit requested the ED to advise whether the school managers of the 18 randomly selected schools (see para. 4.25 above) also served as school managers of other schools.   Audit noted that some of the school managers served as school managers of a very large number of schools.   As an illustration, the numbers of schools served by the school managers of four of these 18 schools are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Number of schools served by some school managers

School	Number of school managers	Number of other schools served by each school manager (Note)
A	9	75 to 77
B	23	47 to 61
C	5	4 to 47
D	18	18 to 23

Source: ED's records

Note: Some of the schools were secondary schools and kindergartens.

5.28   Table 2 above shows that many school managers served a large number of schools at the same time.   For example, School A had nine school managers, each of whom participated in the management of about 75 schools.   This practice is inconsistent with the ACSBM's recommendation that each manager should in principle serve no more than five schools.   The fact that these school managers serve such a large number of schools casts doubts on whether they could perform their duties properly, and whether they could devote sufficient time to each school.

5.29   In September 2002, in response to Audit's enquiries, the ED said that:

(a)   under the existing Education Ordinance, there was no restriction on the number of schools which a manager could serve; and

(b)   the requirement of aided-school managers serving no more than five aided schools would be set out in the Education (Amendment) Bill.

5.30   ***Frequency of SMC meetings.*** To discharge their duties, school managers need to attend regularly at SMC meetings to discuss school matters. Of the 18 primary schools selected for audit (see para. 5.27 above), Audit examined SMC meeting records of 15 schools (Note 18). Audit found that there were variations in the frequency of the SMC meetings among these 15 schools. Details are shown in Figure 22 below.

Figure 22

**Number of SMC meetings
held by 15 schools in 2000-01**
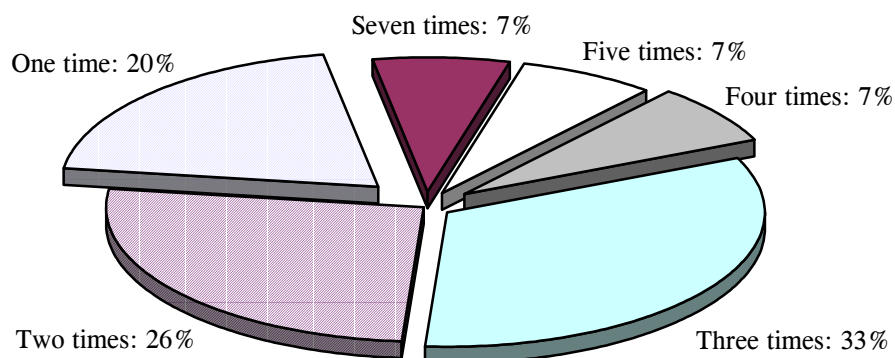
Source: Schools' records

Note 18:   *The records of SMC meetings in three schools were not available for Audit's inspection.*

5.31   ***ED's guidelines on responsibilities of SMC members.***   To help SMC members better understand their role and perform their duties more effectively, in late 2001, the ED issued a booklet entitled *"Responsibilities of School Managers"* for the reference of SMC members, or school managers. It was stated in the booklet that school managers play a leading role in steering the school to promote students' all-round education, including academic and non-academic achievements.

5.32   The responsibilities of school managers include formulating school objectives and policies, budgeting and finance, human resource management and staff development, and monitoring school performance and students' achievements.   Given the wide spectrum of responsibilities of school managers, Audit considers that, for those schools which held meetings only once or twice a year (see Figure 22 above), it is unlikely that their school managers could effectively participate in the affairs of the schools (Note 19).

Staff appraisal and staff development

5.33   ***ED's guidelines on staff appraisal of teachers.***   According to the ED's School Administration Guide issued in 2001, schools should set up a fair and open performance appraisal system for teaching staff. The performance appraisal system should enable schools to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their staff and to identify the staff's corresponding development needs. For the performance appraisal system to be effective, the Guide requires that, in a school:

(a)   an appraiser and an appraisee should reach an agreement on the performance targets at the beginning of an appraisal cycle;

(b)   a mechanism for review and moderation of the appraiser's assessment should be in place (e.g. a countersigning officer should review the appraisal);

(c)   an appraisal interview should be held to discuss the appraisal report;

(d)   there should be an appeal mechanism; and

(e)   the SMC should conduct appraisals of the principal.

Note 19:   *Audit's research shows that, in New Zealand and Australia, the school councils meet about eight times a year. These school councils are key drivers of SBM and they play an integral role in the strategic planning, policy setting and monitoring of the outcomes of the schools.*

5.34   ***Lack of performance appraisal in some schools.*** Of the 18 schools selected for audit review (see para. 5.27 above), Audit noted that:

- two schools (11%) did not conduct performance appraisals of their teachers; and

- the SMCs of eight schools (44%) did not conduct performance appraisals of their principals.

Audit considers that, without formal performance appraisals, it would be difficult for schools to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their staff and identify their development needs.

5.35   In September 2002, in response to Audit's enquiries, the ED said that, as schools were required to put in place a staff appraisal system by the end of 2001-02, the extent of schools' implementation of the system as stated in paragraph 5.34 above might not reflect the updated situation. **Audit considers that the ED needs to ascertain the progress of the implementation of the staff appraisal system in schools with a view to taking appropriate improvement measures.**

5.36   ***Variations in performance attributes among schools.*** In schools where performance appraisals were carried out, the performance attributes for assessment were usually documented on appraisal forms.   The performance attributes mostly cover areas such as management skills, conduct of teaching and personality.   In an appraisal, an appraiser would select one of the ratings (e.g. excellent, good, average, fair and poor) which best describes a teacher's performance in each attribute.   Among the 16 schools selected for audit which conducted performance appraisals for teachers (see para. 5.34 above), Audit noted that there were variations in the thoroughness of the performance attributes for staff appraisal.   While some schools used detailed attributes for teacher appraisal, some schools only used brief attributes.   As an illustration, Table 3 below shows some of the attributes used by two schools for assessing teachers' performance in similar areas.

Table 3

**Performance attributes used by
two schools for assessing teachers' performance in similar areas**

School E	School F
Teaching skills	Preparation for lessons and use of suitable teaching materials
	Clarity in expressing ideas and promotion of students' interest and participation
	Use of teaching aids
	Use of blackboard
	Application of questioning techniques to solicit students' feedback
Classroom management	Flexible use of lesson time having regard to students' needs and the subject being taught
	Maintaining class discipline to provide a good atmosphere for learning

Source: Schools' records

5.37   Table 3 above shows that the performance attributes used by different schools varied significantly. Comparing with School E, the attributes used by School F were more specific and comprehensive, which would enable the appraiser to perform a more thorough assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the appraisee. Audit considers that there is room for schools to improve on adopting specific and comprehensive attributes for assessing teachers' performance.

5.38   Furthermore, Audit noted that, of the 18 schools selected for the audit review, 12 schools had not adopted an arrangement for the appraisers to agree with appraisees, before the commencement of an appraisal cycle, the performance attributes to be assessed. This is not in line with the ED's requirement stated in its School Administration Guide (see para. 5.33(a) above).

5.39   *Lack of appraisal interviews and appeal procedures.*   Of the 18 schools selected for audit, Audit noted that three schools (17%) had not conducted appraisal interviews, and 12 schools (67%) did not have formal procedures for handling appraisees' appeals. Audit also noted that some schools which conducted appraisal interviews had maintained proper records of the appraisal interviews, which showed the matters discussed and the recommendations made to improve future performance.   Audit considers that appraisal interviews and appeal mechanism are crucial components of an effective appraisal system. Appraisal interviews provide feedback to teachers about their performance, and an appeal mechanism helps ensure that there is fairness in the appraisal system.

5.40   *QAI teams' observations on staff appraisal and development.*   In 2000-01, after inspecting 30 primary schools, the ED's QAI teams observed that:

(a)   similar to the observations made in the past few years, "staff development and appraisal" was a relatively weak aspect; and

(b)   13% of schools were rated as performing unsatisfactorily in the above aspect.

5.41   In July 2002, in response to Audit's enquiries, the ED said that:

(a)   all government schools had established a staff appraisal system; and

(b)   all aided schools (except a few schools which would be closed down soon) had pledged to put in place a staff appraisal system by the end of 2001-02.

Audit considers that the ED needs to expedite action to identify those schools which have not set up a formal staff appraisal system and provide appropriate assistance to them to set up such a system.

Audit recommendations on implementation of SBM initiatives

5.42   **Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Education should:**

(a)   **identify and provide appropriate guidance to those schools which have not yet complied with the ED's requirements relating to the SBM on:**

(i)   **annual school plans, annual reports and school profiles (see para. 5.15 above);**

(ii)   **written constitutions for SMCs (see para. 5.21 above);**

(iii)   **the membership of SMCs (see para. 5.26 above); and**

(iv)   **the staff appraisal system (see para. 5.35 above);**

(b)   **require schools to prepare and distribute to parents their annual school plans, annual reports and school profiles (in summary form) (see para. 5.16 above);**

(c)   **provide assistance to schools to help them set up websites for the dissemination of school information (see para. 5.17 above);**

(d)   **require schools to upload their annual school plans, annual reports and school profiles onto their websites (see para. 5.17 above);**

(e)   **identify the school managers who are members of more than five SMCs and advise them that, in line with the ACSBM's recommendation, they should serve no more than five schools (see para. 5.28 above);**

(f)   **consider setting guidelines on the minimum number of meetings to be held by SMCs in a school year (see para. 5.32 above);**

(g)   **ask schools to incorporate in the staff appraisal system the relevant procedures laid down in the ED's School Administration Guide, such as the procedures for conducting appraisal interviews and appeals (see para. 5.39 above);**

(h)   **ensure that SMCs conduct formal appraisals of the performance of school principals (see para. 5.34 above); and**

(i)   **issue guidelines to schools for developing appropriate attributes for assessing the performance of teachers (see para. 5.37 above).**

Response from the Administration

5.43   The **Director of Education** generally agrees with Audit's recommendations on the implementation of the SBM initiatives. He has said that:

Compliance with ED's requirements on SBM

(a)   the ED will help schools comply with the requirements of the new school governance framework and encourage them to do so as soon as possible without waiting till the end of the five-year transition period;

(b)   the ED agrees that schools should involve all key stakeholders like parents, teachers and alumni in their policy decision-making to facilitate SBM. Schools should include the key stakeholders in their SMCs the soonest possible. The ED will encourage and render assistance to schools as soon as they are ready;

(c)   all government primary schools have approved SMC constitutions and all aided schools are governed by their respective SMC as required under the law. However, the submission of SMC constitutions for the approval of the ED is not compulsory at present. Once the Education (Amendment) Bill on the governance framework is enacted, all aided schools will be required to submit the SMC constitutions to the ED for approval;

(d)   since the participation of other stakeholders in the management committee of schools involves a significant change in the management culture of the school sponsoring bodies and schools, schools will be allowed a transitional period of five years after the enactment of the Education (Amendment) Bill to prepare for the change. SMCs of all aided schools shall be incorporated and have their SMC constitutions by the end of the five-year transitional period. When the Education (Amendment) Bill is enacted, the ED will provide a sample SMC constitution to schools;

(e)   the essence of the successful implementation of SBM depends on the educational leadership of both the governance bodies and school executive personnel. The ED will step up measures towards the less effective schools to help them improve their planning and evaluation;

(f)   the ED is helping schools establish a PTA, paving the way for parents to participate in the SMC. The ED has also organised training courses on SBM for school managers;

Setting up of school websites and
uploading school information on websites

(g)   the ED agrees that schools should be more open and transparent in their operation. They should make available their school plans, reports and profiles on their websites for scrutiny by parents and members of the public. The ED will promulgate the good practice of making school information available on school websites and advise all schools to adopt the practice;

(h)   the ED's website will help to disseminate good practices and relevant information to the public;

School managers serving more than five schools

(i)   the ED agrees to help schools comply with the requirement on school managers serving no more than five schools and encourage them to do so as soon as possible without waiting till the end of the five-year transition period;

(j)   the Education (Amendment) Bill will provide that a management committee must comply with the SBM requirements including the Incorporated Management Committee composition and the requirement that a school manager cannot serve more than five schools. A school needs to comply with the requirements before it will be approved for incorporation under the Education Ordinance;

Appraisal system for teachers and principals

(k)   the ED agrees that it is important for schools to have a staff appraisal system to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their staff and identify their development needs. The ED will conduct a survey in November 2002 on the implementation of the staff appraisal system in schools;

(l)   the ED will provide appropriate guidance to those schools which still have not put in place the staff appraisal system;

(m)   regarding the appraisal system for principals, the ED will discuss with the supervisors or the SMCs to ensure that schools will have a system for the performance management of school principals;

(n)   individual schools are at different stages of the development continuum of staff appraisal. It would be easier for school personnel to agree on simpler performance attributes at the early stage of the setting up of the appraisal system, and then move on to more elaborate attributes at a later stage after gaining some experience; and

(o)   the ED agrees that there should be performance standards that teachers should reach. The ED will issue guidelines on teacher performance management and suggest to schools domains where a teacher's performance should be assessed. The guidelines will cover performance expectations and their descriptors.

QAIs conducted by ED

5.44   Since September 1997, the Quality Assurance Division (Note 20) of the ED has conducted QAIs of the performance of schools. The main objectives of the QAIs are to provide:

(a)   the schools inspected with an external opinion on their strengths and key issues for improvement and further development;

(b)   the Government and the public with information on the current situation regarding the quality of school education in Hong Kong; and

(c)   the ED with information for disseminating good practices among schools.

5.45   The ED's QAIs include full inspections and focus inspections. For full inspections, a QAI team focuses on four domains, namely management and organisation, teaching and learning, support for students and school ethos, and attainment and achievement. The four domains are further categorised into 17 areas and 41 performance indicators (see Appendix D for details). Based on the 41 performance indicators, the QAI team reviews related documents and conducts interviews with the principal, teachers, staff, parents and students of the school inspected. A report is sent to the school upon completion of the inspection. The school is required to submit to the ED an action plan to address the key issues for action as given in the inspection report within four months after the receipt of the final inspection report. In addition, the school is also required to report the progress of implementing the improvement measures in the school's annual reports. For focus inspections, schools are inspected on specific subject groups, key learning areas and/or aspects of the schools' work according to the needs of the schools.

Note 20: *The Quality Assurance Division is headed by a Chief Inspector who is responsible for conducting inspections of primary, secondary and special schools as well as kindergartens. The QAI teams responsible for conducting inspections of primary schools are composed of 41 officers (these 41 officers also perform other duties, such as developing performance indicators). The estimated staff cost of these 41 officers amounts to $38 million a year.*

5.46   Schools which volunteer for QAIs are selected for full inspection. In 2000-01, the QAI teams also selected half of the schools for full inspection from a stratified random sample. Table 4 below shows the number of full and focus inspections conducted by the QAI teams between 1997-98 (year of inception of the QAI teams) and 2001-02.

Table 4

**Number of inspections conducted by
the ED's QAI teams between 1997-98 and 2001-02**

School year	Number of full inspections of primary schools	Number of focus inspections of primary schools
1997-98	11	4
1998-99	29	0
1999-2000	25	0
2000-01	30	0
2001-02	42	118

(Full inspections for 1997-98 to 2000-01 bracketed together: 95)

Source: ED's records

Audit observations on QAIs conducted by ED

Need for implementing a self-assessment arrangement

5.47   Audit's research reveals that, in some advanced countries (e.g. in Victoria, Australia), school inspections are in the form of an independent validation of the school self-assessment results. Audit also notes that this self-assessment arrangement has been adopted by the Social Welfare Department for monitoring the performance of subvented residential care homes for the elderly. **Audit considers that the ED needs to consider the merits of introducing some form of self-assessment arrangement to facilitate the monitoring of the performance of aided and government schools.** Under this arrangement, schools are required to conduct self assessments and report the assessment results to the ED on standardised forms for necessary follow-up action.

QAI teams' observations on schools' performance

5.48   In the four years between 1997-98 and 2000-01, the ED's QAI teams conducted full inspections of 95 primary schools and focus inspections of 4 primary schools. (In 2001-02, the

numbers of full inspections and focus inspections were 42 and 118 respectively). The inspections were conducted based on the 17 key areas (see Appendix D). The QAI teams observed that some schools had performed unsatisfactorily in the following three key areas:

(a) **Staff management:** 9% of the schools performed unsatisfactorily;

(b) **Self evaluation:** 18% of the schools performed unsatisfactorily; and

(c) **Curriculum:** 9% of the schools performed unsatisfactorily.

5.49   Based on the inspection reports of the QAI teams, Audit notes that the common weaknesses of the schools include the following:

Staff management

(a) involvement of teachers in the school improvement and school policies was inadequate;

(b) professional sharing and discussions among teachers were insufficient;

(c) communication channels among staff were not fully utilised;

Self evaluation

(d) well-defined procedures and effective tools for monitoring and evaluating various aspects of school work were not established;

(e) evaluation of the effectiveness of individual school programmes was not conducted thoroughly;

(f) evaluation findings were not used to revise long-term goals and to work out the annual targets for the next year;

Curriculum

(g) the curriculum was not planned and organised adequately to cater for the diversified abilities and needs of the students;

(h)   there was a lack of effective monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of school curriculum;

(i)   there were inadequate opportunities for professional development and exchanges among teachers; and

(j)   heads of subject departments did not take an effective leadership role in curriculum planning and development.

5.50   **Of the 99 schools inspected by the ED's QAI teams during 1997-98 to 2000-01, three schools were assessed by the teams as performing unsatisfactorily in all the three areas of staff management, self evaluation and curriculum.**

Audit recommendations on QAIs conducted by ED

5.51   **Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Education should:**

(a)   **consider the merits of introducing some form of self-assessment arrangement for schools, including procedures for the ED to verify the schools' self-assessment reports (see para. 5.47 above); and**

(b)   **provide guidance and training to schools which have difficulties in implementing the ED's requirements on staff management, self evaluation and curriculum (see para. 5.49 above).**

Response from the Administration

5.52   The **Director of Education** generally agrees with Audit's recommendations on QAIs conducted by the ED. He has said that:

(a)   the ED has promoted school self-evaluation among schools. Self-evaluation will become a regular practice in schools and the QAI teams will conduct validation of the evaluation; and

(b)   apart from providing guidance, advice and training by the ED, schools should address their own weaknesses and take initiative to make appropriate improvements.

**Methodology and response rates of
Audit's questionnaire survey on stakeholders' views
on delivery of effective primary education**

Selection of samples

1. Audit's consultants randomly selected 53 primary schools (8 government and 45 aided primary schools) and 69 secondary schools (7 government, 52 aided and 10 private secondary schools) to participate in the questionnaire survey.

2. In the survey, all the principals in the 53 primary and 69 secondary schools were requested to complete a questionnaire for principals, and all the teachers in the 53 primary schools were requested to complete a questionnaire for teachers.

3. P5 and P6 students in the 53 primary schools whose birthdays fell in the month of May were requested to complete a questionnaire for students. P1 to P4 students were excluded because they were considered too young to complete a questionnaire independently.

4. Parents of the students sampled in the 53 primary schools were also requested to complete a questionnaire for parents.

Survey questionnaires

5. In the questionnaires, the respondents were asked to indicate, among others, their perception of the extent of schools' achievement of the objectives of primary education as recommended by the EC and adopted by the Government (see para. 2.2 in PART 2 above). In respect of each of the objectives of primary education, each respondent was requested to select one of the following as his perception of the extent of the achievement of his school (or his child's school):

    •   the objective has been fully achieved;

    •   the objective has been largely achieved;

    •   the objective has been half achieved;

    •   only a small fraction of the objective has been achieved; and

    •   no comments.

Response rates

6. Of the 53 primary schools and 69 secondary schools, 45 primary schools (85%) and 51 secondary schools (74%) returned the questionnaires respectively.

7. In addition to the questionnaires which were completed and returned by the 45 primary-school principals and 51 secondary-school principals, the other questionnaires completed and returned included those from 1,271 primary-school teachers (response rate of 75%), 752 primary students (response rate of 81%) and parents of 688 primary students (response rate of 73%).

Source: Audit's survey

Major sports events/activities organised for primary students in 2001-02

	Event/activity	Number of primary schools participated	Number of primary students participated
(a)	School Sports Programmes	334	192,692
(b)	Youth Football Promotion Scheme	(Note)	17,054
(c)	Youth Table-tennis Promotion Scheme	(Note)	1,000
(d)	Youth Windsurfing Promotion Scheme	(Note)	500
(e)	Children Badminton Promotion Scheme	(Note)	1,500
(f)	School Physical Fitness Award Scheme	262	76,610
(g)	Searching for New Sport Stars 2002	47	1,500
(h)	Outdoor Education Camps	466	54,864
(i)	Hong Kong Schools Sports Federation — Inter-school Sports Competitions	745	41,305
(j)	Inter-school Lion Dance Competition	18	120
(k)	Inter-school Dragon Dance Competition	3	48
(l)	Inter-school Fencing Competition	28	234
(m)	Territory-wide School-based Extra-curricular Activity — Programme of Football	77	4,610
(n)	Sports Aerobics Award Scheme	11	3,000
(o)	Shuttlecock Promotion Scheme	90	250
(p)	Jump Rope for Heart Scheme	121	54,000
(q)	Regular Exercises for Health — Morning Exercises, Eye Exercises and Light Stretching Exercises	37	11,866

Source: ED's records

Note: The primary schools and students included private schools and students. The ED did not have information on the number of schools participated in the Youth Football Promotion Scheme, Youth Table-tennis Promotion Scheme, Youth Windsurfing Promotion Scheme and Children Badminton Promotion Scheme.

Eight surveys conducted by the CHSC

(a)   Survey on homework and schoolbags (1994)

(b)   Study on parents' opinion on the bilingual development of primary and pre-primary children (1995)

(c)   Survey on parents' views on comic books (1995)

(d)   Research on parents' and students' attitudes towards extra-curricular activities (1996)

(e)   Survey on parents' views on sex education (1997)

(f)   Survey on parents' views on the rights and responsibilities in their children's education (1998)

(g)   Survey on quality and quantity of homework for primary school students in Hong Kong (1999)

(h)   Focus group study of parents' views on new education initiatives (1999)

Source: CHSC's records

Performance indicators for primary schools

A. Management and organisation domain

Area	Performance indicator
Leadership	1. Professional competence
	2. Working relationship
Planning and administration	3. Management framework
	4. School policy
	5. General administration
Staff management	6. Deployment of staff
	7. Staff coordination
	8. Effectiveness of senior staff
	9. Staff development and appraisal
Financial management	10. Budgeting
	11. Monitoring and evaluation
Resources and accommodation	12. Provision of resources
	13. Organisation and use of resources and space
Self evaluation	14. Evaluation tools and procedures
	15. Staff involvement
	16. Reporting and action

B. Teaching and learning domain

Area	Performance indicator
Curriculum	17. Curriculum management
	18. Curriculum planning and organisation
Class teaching	19. Planning and organisation of teaching
	20. Teaching strategies
	21. Teaching skills
	22. Classroom climate
	23. Subject knowledge and professional development

Area	Performance indicator
Student learning	24. Mode of learning
	25. Participation and progress in learning
Assessment as part of teaching and learning	26. Assessment policy and system
	27. Assessment methods
	28. Use of assessment information

C. Support for students and school ethos domain

Area	Performance indicator
Pastoral care	29. Discipline, guidance and counselling
Personal, social and cultural development	30. Extra-curricular activities
	31. Cross-curricular programmes
Support for students with special educational needs	32. Learning support programmes
	33. Caring services
Links with parents and community	34. Home-school cooperation
	35. Link with external organisations
School climate	36. Morale
	37. Human relationship

D. Attainment and achievement domain

Area	Performance indicator
Academic performance of students	38. Academic attainment
	39. Academic related achievement
Non-academic performance of students	40. Participation and achievement in extra-curricular activities
	41. Discipline

Source: ED's records

Acronyms and abbreviations

ACSBM	Advisory Committee on School-based Management
CDC	Curriculum Development Council
CHSC	Committee on Home-School Co-operation
EC	Education Commission
ED	Education Department
EMB	Education and Manpower Bureau
HAB	Home Affairs Bureau
HKAT	Hong Kong Attainment Test
HKSAR	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
IRTP	Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme
IT	Information Technology
LCSD	Leisure and Cultural Services Department
LIFO	Last in, first out
P1	Primary One
P2	Primary Two
P3	Primary Three
P4	Primary Four
P5	Primary Five
P6	Primary Six
PE	Physical Education
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
QAI	Quality Assurance Inspection
RTC	Resource Teaching Centre
SBM	School-based management
S1	Secondary One
S3	Secondary Three
SMC	School Management Committee